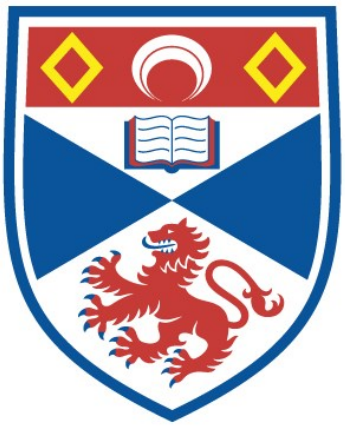
LOCAL DEFENCE OF ROME'S NORTH-EAST FRONTIER - THIRD TO SEVENTH CENTURIES AD

William Edmund Fahey

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St Andrews



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Local Defence of Rome's North-East Frontier: Third -- Seventh Centuries A.D.

William Edmund Fahey

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M.Phil. (mode A) at the University of St. Andrews

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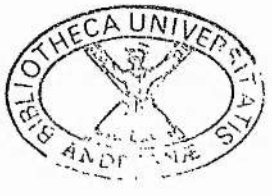

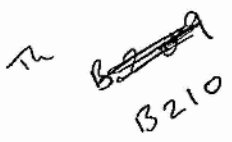
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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the function of local communities in the defence of the late Roman empire along the North-East frontier. The North-East is defined as those lands between 37 and 49 degrees longitude east and 42 and 36 degrees latitude north, encompassing territories in northern Syria, northern Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Georgia. Efforts at controlling this region had to take into account a variety of communities and environmental conditions. The diversity of the terrain impeded easy unification of the region. Throughout Antiquity attempts were made to overcome these barriers through projects which largely revolved around specific urban centres. Such centres provided points through which imperial powers controlled the periphery *via* local agents. In order to establish the difficulties faced by both local communities and the late Roman government, the successes and failures of previous imperial powers at controlling the region shall be surveyed.

During the fourth century a defensive strategy in which the Roman army avoided pitched battles and increasingly relied on specialists, the *limitanei*, and the subject population to keep invaders at bay, was developed in the North-East. The imperial government carefully used traditional power structures and local customs to secure the loyalty of both provincial leaders and subjects. This can be observed in detailed studies of several important frontier settlements. Armenian sources have been used in conjunction with Classical literature to create an enriched picture of the North-East.

The Christian hierarchy was central to the late Roman government's control of the frontier communities. While they rarely held legitimate military authority, the clergy played a tremendous part in bolstering the morale of commanders, troops, and citizens. They were called upon to arbitrate judicial cases within the empire, and following this development, they acted as intermediaries between imperial courts, opposing armies, and mutinous troops. The Church's missionary efforts and communication with Christian communities on all sides of the frontier made clerics useful agents for negotiation and a valuable source of information. As a consequence, Christianity influenced the development of diplomacy in the region and was in turn influenced by political and military matters.

It is debatable whether the late Roman state had developed any sort of "grand strategy" in the North-East. Yet the willingness to support local initiative over the course of three hundred years suggests that the imperial government consciously followed a consistent policy, not unlike that employed during early periods with regards to client kings.

I, William Edmund Fahey, here by certify that this thesis, which is approxiamately 60,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

date 12th 1992 signature of candidate .....

I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No. 12 in October 1989 and as a candidate for the M. Phil. (mode A) in October 1989; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1989 and 1992.

date 12th 1992 signature of candidate.....

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of M. Phil. (Mode A) in the University of St. Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

date..... signature of supervisor.....

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Contents

Preface

Seven years ago, in the middle of a Virgil lecture, Fr. John Nicholas Felton, S.J. explained to me why Ancient History was the single most exciting discipline to pursue. That one conversation sent me on my way. I never had the pleasure of reading history with Fr. Felton, but had it not been for him and the many other inspirational teachers of Xavier University, I might never have come to Scotland. Here in St. Andrews, I am grateful for the brief time I have spent in the Dept. of Ancient History. Early portions of this thesis were read by G.E. Rickman, and I have profited from his many kind words. M. Austin, J. Harries, and Mary Whitby have always made me feel welcome. Tig and Lynn have never failed to provide solutions to every difficulty. Greatest thanks of all is due to Michael Whitby, who supervised this thesis, and who put up with delays, crises, and my ridiculous spelling for over two years. Without his enthusiastic, and occasionally brooding, presence, I would never have finished this thesis.

In an attempt to understand the geography of the North-East frontier I visited eastern Turkey in July and August of 1990, and June of 1991. These trips were graciously assisted by the the Russell Trust, St. Leonard's College, and the American Travel Fund. In addition to Michael Whitby, help provided by A. Kettle, F. Quinault, and T.C. Smout was essential in securing funds. While in Turkey I enjoyed the hospitality of the British Institute of Archaeology, and the guidance and tales of D.H. French and E. Ivison. Most of all, I benefited from the company of C.S. Lightfoot, who brought the frontier to life, and made my travels memorable. Furthermore, the Lightfoot family on several occasions provided a safe haven for a weary traveller.

Several other households have been responsible for creating jolly respites from my academic life: the Whitbys, the Rickmans, the Hookers, various folk at Malborough Road, the Polletts, the Hoyles, and most especially William, Olive, and Sam Duncan. Because of them I neither

lacked food nor drink, and found many homes away from home. My final days in Scotland were made less frantic by Fr. Camillus, C.S.B. and the Benedictines of Pluscarden, where I found some peace. I shall deeply miss the innumerable characters of St. Andrews, and can only hope to return again.

There are friends on both sides of the Atlantic whom I now gladly mention. First, there are those who kept me in-- or at least supplied me with-- good spirits: Dave Hansen, Sally Guilfoyle, Allen Hagler, Richard Hooker, Guido Leadbeater, Paul Beddoe, Julia Delancey, Helen Raftopoulos, Robert and Laura Wyer, Andrew Pettegree, and, of course Clarence, Murphy and Lewis. Moreover, there are those hardy souls who proof-read my crude chapters: Matthew Julian "Big Boy" Rampley, Navina Krishna, Kathleen Dragoo, and Shawn Pollett. Special notes of thanks should go to Hugh Macnaghten for his computer and a low interest loan, and Peter Maxwell-Stuart, who tried to find various books and papers for me in Cambridge. Patrick O' Loughlin jeopardized his health in obtaining works unavailable to me in this country. And I am perpetually thankful for Amy Elizabeth Verkest and her rock from Rome.

My family has always provided me with the greatest support. Encouraging letters have never ceased arriving from the Faheys in Maine and the Carrolls in Florida. My brothers, Sean and Kevin, have done everything in their powers to keep their older brother humble. My parents have inspired me at every step of my education. It is impossible to thank them adequately for the pleasant days I spent in Scotland.

William Edmund Fahey
St. Andrews
April 16th, 1992
A.M.D.G.

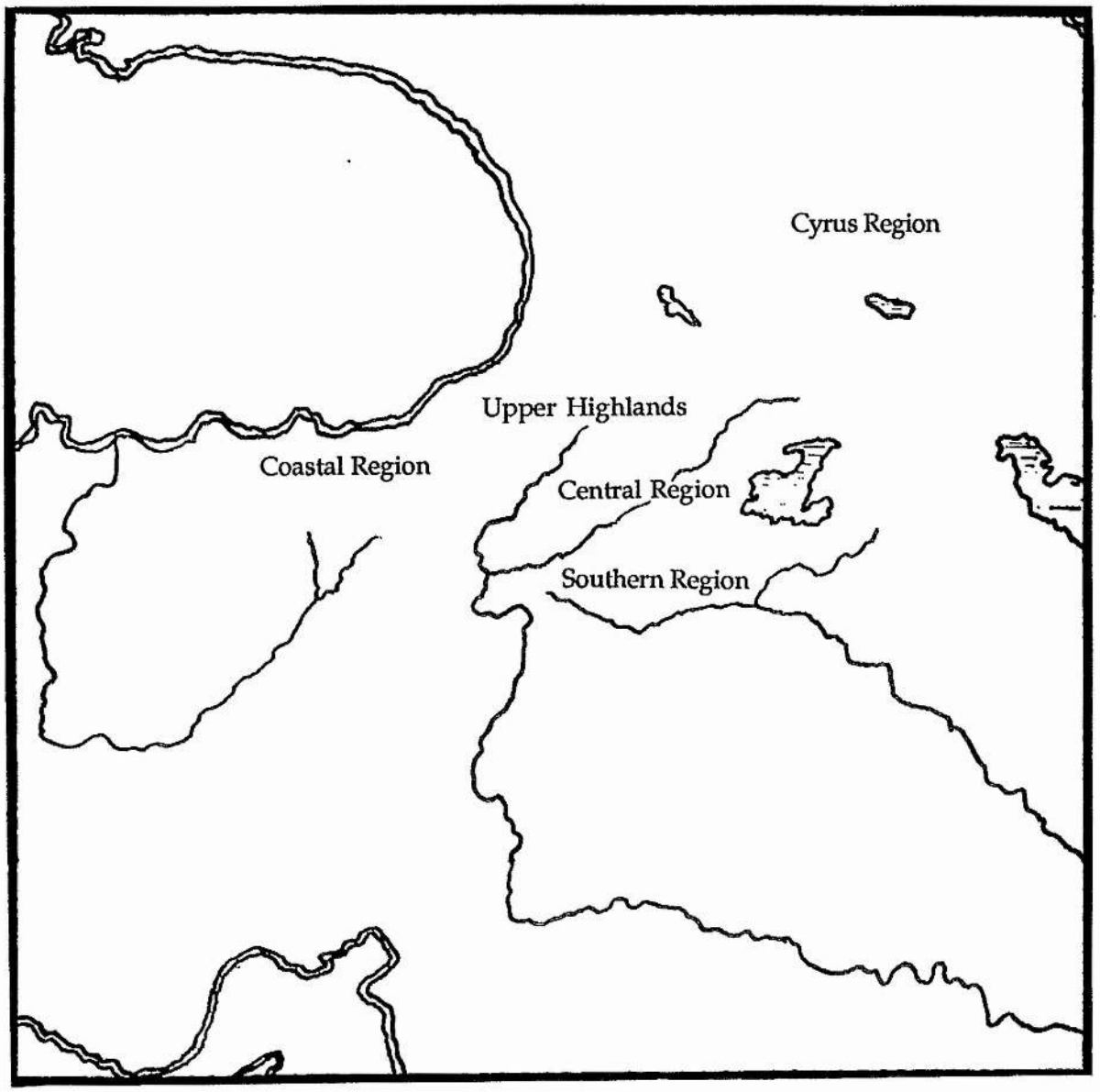
Abbreviations

ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
AnatSt	*Anatolian Studies*
BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*
CHI	*Cambridge History of Iran*
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*
CSCO	*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*
DHGE	*Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique*
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
EI (1)	*The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leyden, 1913-38)
EI (2)	*The Encyclopedia of Islam* (London, 1960-)
FHG	*Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*
IGLS	*Inscriptiones grécques et latines de la Syrie*
IGR	*Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes*
ILS	*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
RBK	*Reallexicon zur Byzantinischen Kunst*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

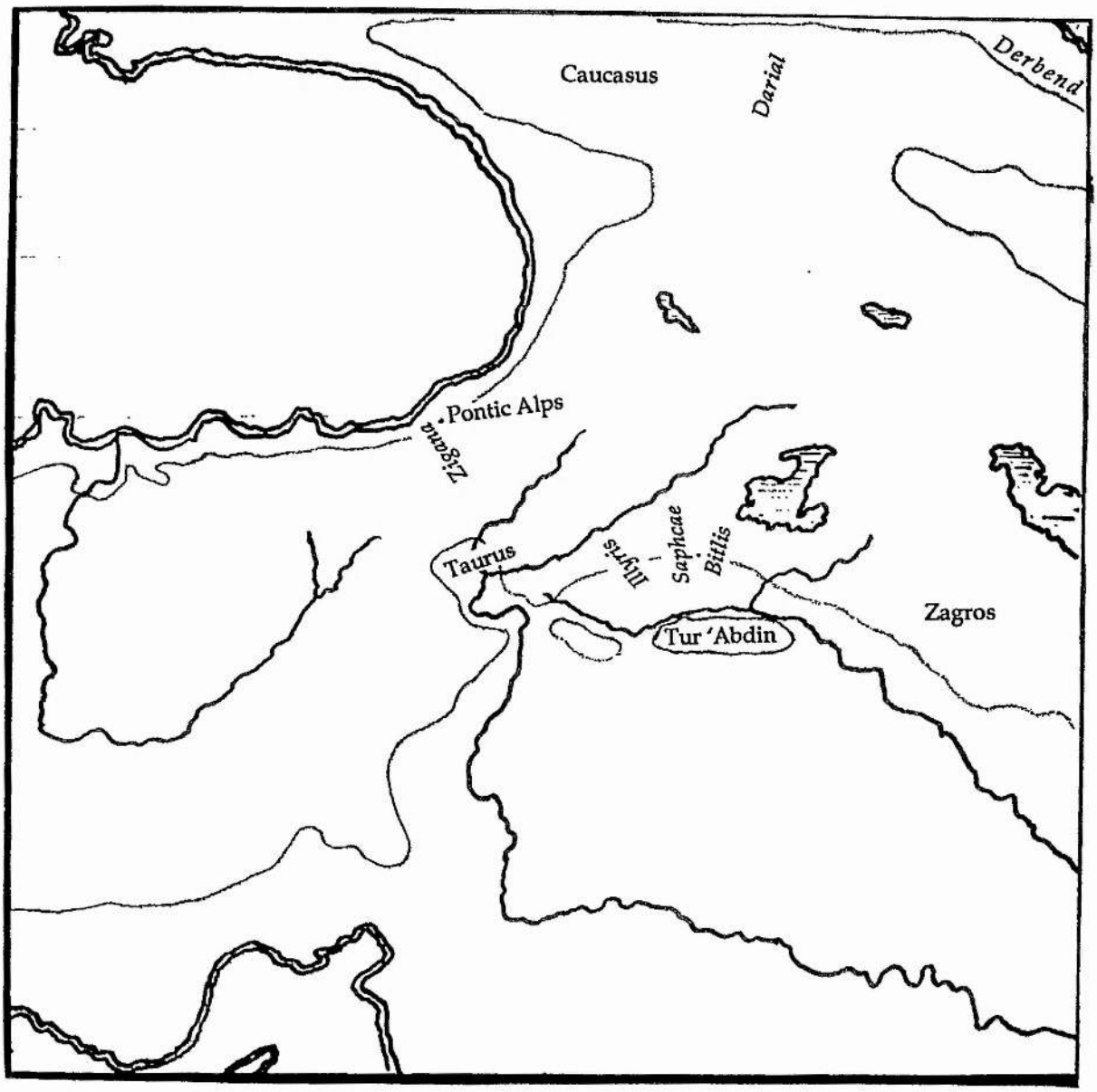
Maps:

All Maps by W.E. Fahey, 1992.

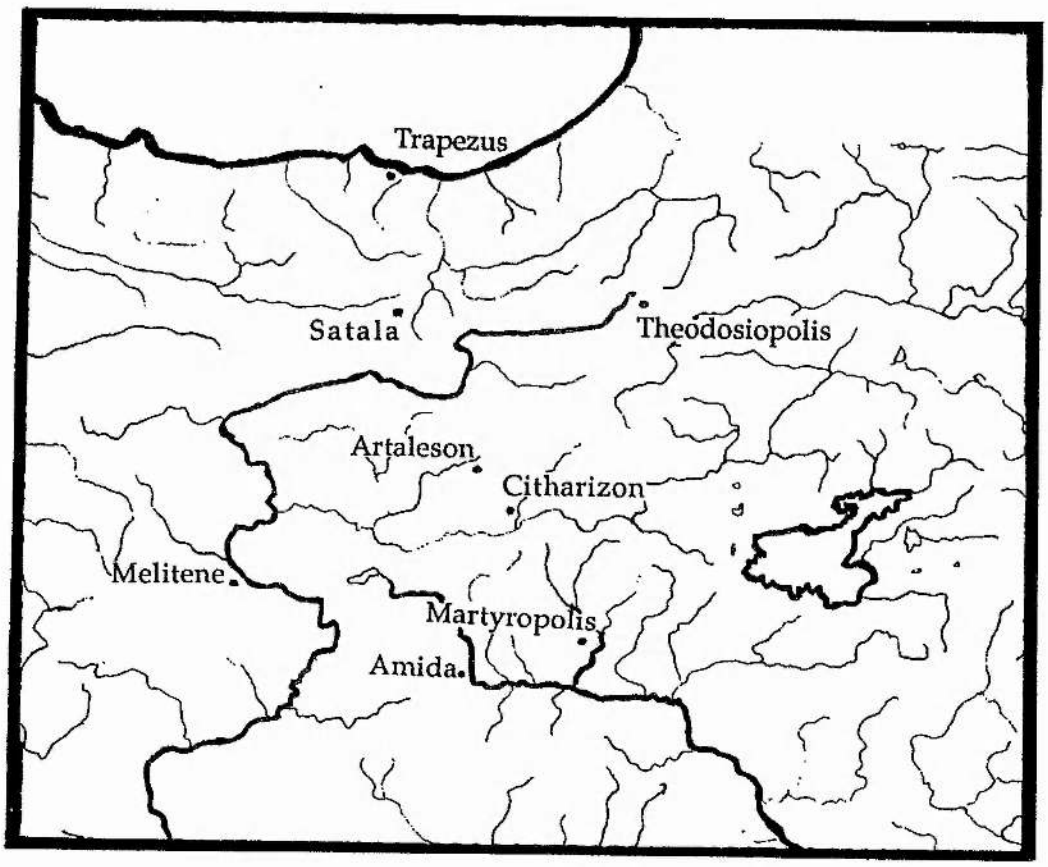
Map one: Geographical regions discussed in Chapter One.



Map Two: Principal mountain ranges and passes.
(Shaded area represents land over 1000 metres)



Map Three: Principal sites mentioned in Chapter Two.



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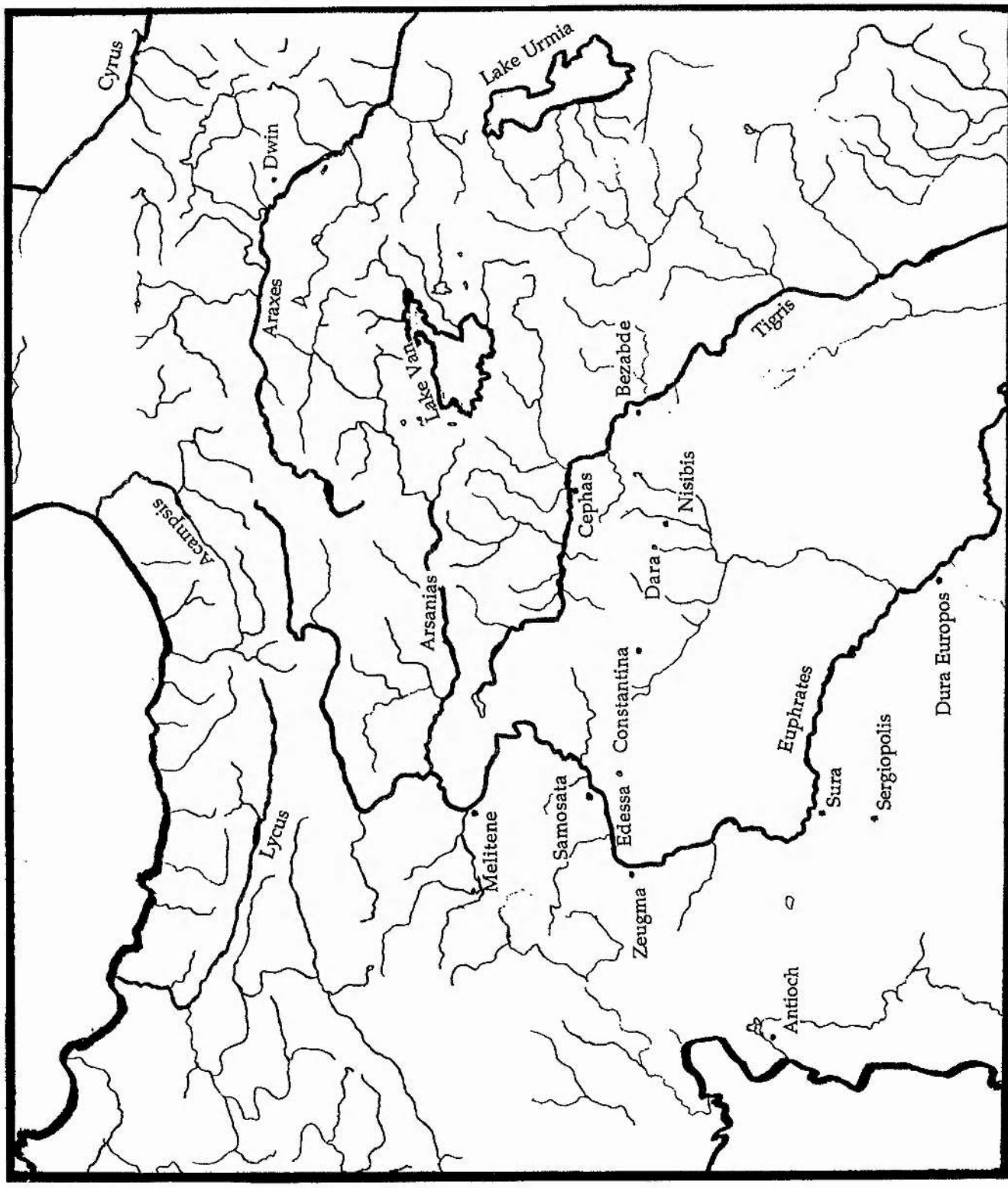
50 100 Miles

Map Four: Other important sites on the frontier.



Introduction

Over the past three decades ancient historians have begun to examine their own presuppositions about the effects of ancient imperialism from what is thought to be a more detached perspective than have earlier scholars, who were themselves members of imperial societies.[1] The results have allowed for a refreshing study of many periods. This thesis examines one particular area of the Roman frontier: the North-East. Much attention is focused on the manner in which individual urban communities conducted their defence, and the ways which governments employed local leaders to achieve imperial goals.

Efforts at controlling this region had to take into account the variety of communities and environmental conditions. The diversity of the terrain, especially in mountainous regions, impeded easy unification of the region. Throughout Antiquity attempts were made to overcome these barriers through various projects which largely revolved around specific urban centres. Such centres provided points through which imperial powers controlled the periphery *via* local agents. In order to establish the difficulties faced by both local communities and the late Roman government, I shall survey the success and failure of previous imperial powers at controlling the region in chapter one. I have borrowed certain concepts from modern geopolitical studies to aid my interpretations.

Diocletian and Constantius II developed a defensive strategy in which the army avoided pitched battles and increasingly relied on specialists, the *limitanei*, and the subject population to keep invaders at bay. For this system to have been effective, the imperial government carefully used traditional power structures and local customs to secure the loyalty of both provincial leaders and subjects. In chapter two I shall illustrate this in detailed studies of several important frontier settlements.

I believe that the Christian hierarchy became essential to the late Roman government's control of the frontier communities, and, in chapter three, I have devoted special attention to the neglected role which

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[1] For a discussion and some references see B. Isaac (1990) 1-2.

ecclesiastics played in the defences of urban centres. While they rarely held legitimate military authority, the clergy were of tremendous importance in bolstering the morale of commanders, troops, and citizens. From the early fourth century Christian leaders obtained greater secular privileges such as grants of land, endowments, and civic responsibilities. They were called upon to arbitrate in judicial cases within the empire, and following this development, they acted as intermediaries between opposing armies, imperial courts, and mutinous troops. The Church's missionary efforts and communication between Christian communities on all sides of the frontier made the clergy useful agents for negotiation and a valuable source of information. As a consequence, Christianity influenced the development of diplomacy in the region and by participating in these affairs was in turn influenced by political and military matters. I shall discuss these matters in chapter four.

It is debatable whether the late Roman state had developed any sort of "grand strategy" in the North-East. In his recent book, *The Limits of Empire*, Benjamin Isaac criticised arguments which favour a systematic frontier policy. Yet, in my fifth chapter, I shall argue that the willingness to support local initiative over the course of three hundred years suggests that the imperial government consciously followed a consistent policy, not unlike that employed during earlier periods with regards to client kings.

Armenian and Syriac literature contains numerous passages of historical importance. I have attempted to make the most use possible of certain ancient and early medieval authors, in the belief that adding a non-western perspective enhances our understanding of an area that was always, to varying degrees, "oriental". These texts have been difficult to obtain, and are often obscure. However, I have attempted to refer to these eastern sources so long as they can be corroborated or at least compared with Classical material.

I have tried, where and when possible, to draw my archaeological field experience into the thesis, especially with regards to geography and examination of frontier settlements. Again, I must apologise for a rudimentary knowledge of the discipline; since archaeological survey and excavation reports of late Roman occupation in the North-East are still in the formative period, I have given precedent to textual evidence.

The Local communities Armenia, and northern Syria and Mesopotamia played a crucial part in defending the interior of Asia Minor for over four hundred years, and as such are a worthy subject for scholarly investigation.

A Geopolitical Introduction to Ciscaucasia:

§ 1. Introduction:

This chapter is divided into two sections: first, a geographical, and second an historical survey of eastern Anatolian and Caucasian lands until the Sassanian era. The geographical section will sketch the main physical features of the entire area, paying attention to regional diversity, and in particular, highlighting certain features, such as rivers and passes, essential to the development of frontier defence and institutions. The second section will analyse the evolution of the frontier region during four periods: the Urartian (14th-7th centuries B.C.), the Achaemenid (6th-4th B.C.), the Hellenistic (4th-2nd B.C.), and the period of Romano-Parthian wars (2nd B.C.-A.D. 3rd). This analysis will briefly review specific events from these four periods which encouraged sociopolitical unification (centripetal forces) and elements which promoted disintegration (centrifugal). Such an analysis does not aim towards the establishment of a comprehensive history, but rather towards an understanding of why the region was a theatre of conflict.

§ 2. Geography:

The geographic area studied in this thesis involves approximately 350,000 sq. km. of land between 37 and 49 degrees longitude east, and 42 and 36 degrees latitude north.[1] For the sake of consistency and clarity, this entire area will be referred to as Ciscaucasia *in this chapter*; although this designation embraces lands such as northern Mesopotamia and Syria, regions not normally included under such an appellation. It is necessary to avoid the ambiguity words such as Armenia or Georgia may occasion due to their fluctuating dual geographic and political meanings.[2] The area

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[1] The geographical descriptions in this chapter are derived from a reading of the ancient sources, the Victorian travellers Ainsworth, Brant, and Pollington, *Journal of the Royal Geographic Society* 11 (1841), Admiralty Handbooks on Mesopotamia and Turkey, and D. Oates (1968) Chp. 1.

[2] See C. Toumanoff (1963) 11-12 on the difficulties of naming this region. The lands within Ciscaucasia contain the North-East frontier of this thesis. However, since this chapters

is bounded in the north by the Black Sea, Pontic Alps and the Caucasus mountains, in the east by the Caspian Sea and the Zagros range, in the south first by the Taurus mountains, and then by the 200mm isohyet, and in the west the anti-Taurus mountains. Due to the diversity of terrain and environment found within this area, five main regions will be described in greater detail.

The Coastal Region: The Coastal Region of this survey runs from the ancient harbour of Sinope in the west to the lands below the Caucasus Range just south of Dioscurias. In general the region is a relatively narrow strip of land lying below the Paryadres and Moschi range of the Erzurum highlands on the southern side of the Black Sea and below the Caucasus range on the east. This thin belt of land rises sharply to the inland plateau and is scarred frequently with fast flowing rivulets. Of restricted use agriculturally, the region is densely covered by pine, wooded thickets, and in some places sub-tropical forest, although small highland pastures are not unknown. Mist and fog usually obscure the shore, as the warm, moist winds moving inland condense in the surrounding highlands. This activity leads to heavy precipitation and cloud cover. The region averages one hundred days of rain a year, and over three hundred days of cloudy or overcast skies. Clear weather is almost entirely confined to the days between June and September.

Cyrus Region: The Cyrus Region lies just on the north-east perimeter of the ancient Armenia proper. Its limits stretch from the Moschi Mountains on the border of Colchis in the west to the Caspian Sea in the east; the core of the region being the Cyrus river valley itself. In the south, the region is separated from the Araxes Valley by a high range of mountains and the north is contained by the Caucasus range. The eastern third of the region is characterised by some of the densest pine-forests of the entire Roman frontier; and below the canopy of foliage lie rugged highlands, almost entirely uncultivable. Countless ravines have been carved out by the surging tributaries of the Cyrus. Following the river eastward the terrain becomes more subdued, moving from undulating hills to a great plain which dominates the further half of the region. Snow

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examines the region before Roman jurisdiction it shall simply be referred to as Ciscaucasia here.

storms are frequent, happening sixty or more days a year, and snow lies on the ground for approximately seven months (permanently on high mountains). Rainfall is heavy near the coastal zones; these areas also experience light fog cover.

Upper Highlands Region: The Upper Highlands of this survey begin south-west of Themiscyra elevated above the coastal region and run west beneath the Paryadres and Moschi mountains into the valley of the river Araxes. In general the western half of the region is rough and wind swept, though some cereal production is possible as one moves down the Lycus river valley. In the east, highland gives away to a wide valley rich in pasture and plough lands. Forestation is only heavy along the mountainous borders, especially along the Moschi range which is thick with evergreens. Summers in the region are mild, but winters are harsh, with temperatures hovering around freezing. Cloud coverage averages about two hundred days a year, concentrated during the winter months. Rainfall is frequent, but not heavy, yet snow falls fifty to sixty days a year and lies on the ground for four months. These conditions grow worse with higher altitude, so that passes are often blocked for up to eight months of the year.

Central Region (Eastern Anatolia): In some respects the central region is one great plain which rolls from the mountains encircling Lake Van down to the Taurus chain near Melitene. It is bordered to the north and south by the Erzurum Highlands and the east Taurus range respectively, and split by the Arsaninas river. The alluvial soil is optimal for all varieties of agriculture, although the north and east quadrants possess some wasteland in the form of marshes and rocky high-ground. The southern border is lightly wooded. In all seasons the temperature is mild, with less than one hundred and fifty days of cloud cover. Snow fall is comparatively light, occurring on fewer than thirty days a year.

Southern Region (Eastern Anatolia): The southern region comprises the broad, upper Mesopotamian plain and one, almost self-contained area, centring around the upper Tigris. The Mesopotamian plain is, for the most part, dry and bereft of all but rudimentary agriculture. On the other hand, the upper Tigris waters a fertile, though in some places marshy, plain. The entire region is the flattest of all sectors examined in this survey. Eastern Anatolia's climate is affected in several

ways by the openness of the region. Hot winds blow up from Syria and raise the temperature (ten degrees higher on account of the winds). Thus summers are especially hot (well into the nineties) and cloud cover is minimal with less than one hundred days of coverage. Rain is heavy during the winter months throughout the region. The area surrounding Amida experiences light snow on its plain, but along the nearby mountains and passes snow may bury whole villages and seal off communities.

To the east of ancient Armenia lay Media Atropatene, the western portions of which were very similar to the more mountainous of the lands just described. Yet the mountains which bordered Armenia did posses one resource its neighbour was short on: gold. Well into late antiquity the metal was panned from the mountain streams or mined, and was accounted a source of wealth for the Persians.[3]

To understand the difficulties succeeding imperial powers had in assimilating Ciscaucasia into their realms, one must take account of the impediments which physical barriers imposed on unified control. Not only was it impossible for any single region effectively to dominate communication with and control of outlying areas, but micro-unity was also retarded by the myriad network of valley communities into which Ciscaucasia was subdivided. Minimal river navigation was possible in the highland regions.[4] However the river valleys did foster communication by land routes which ran parallel to the water courses.

The mountains themselves acted as a physical deterrent against political unification.[5] Lofty ranges sealed Ciscaucasia from easy assimilation from any direction, except along the Black Sea. Unlike the open and largely homogenous flat lands to the south, neither Armenia nor Georgia could be subjugated by the rapid deployment of cavalry. Nor was it a simple task to control nodal points in the region, for there was no natural centre which could dominate peripheral regions. Until such central points are present, unification of any sort is an impossibility.[6] Thus in the formative period of Ciscaucasian history, the physical

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[3] Procopius, *Wars*, 1.15.18; Mal., 18.54.
[4] Admiralty Intelligence Division (1942-3) 256; H.A. Manandian (1965) 20-1.
[5] C. Burney and D. M. Lang (1971) 8.
[6] R. Hartshorne (1964b) 87.

environment encouraged the development of micro-communities, where each tribe created customs, values, and languages unique to their own valley.[7] This early isolation was instrumental in the later formation of Armenian feudalism under the Naxarar system, and so is equally important to the understanding of the Christian hierarchy which shadowed secular evolution. Fortunately, the development of internal and external highways saved Ciscaucasia from ossification; its history is marked by perennial migration and blending of races.[8] For the barriers of rivers, mountains, and valleys remain so only until technology, social change, or sheer determination reforms them into channels of communications.[9] Hence, it is understandable that the Pontic coast, Colchis and northern Mesopotamia were frequently annexed or colonised. In each case the open terrain, sea, or limited water ways encouraged central command of nodal areas. When one group monopolises focal points such as natural harbours, river mouths, oases, it is not only feasible, but almost inevitable that their possessors will seek to influence the hinterland.[10]

A casual inspection of any detailed map of Ciscaucasia will indicate the abundance of river valleys. However these valleys tend to prohibit most movement due to their tortuous rock laden courses, wide seasonal fluctuations in current and width, and sudden changes in altitude. The mountain chains which traverse the region follow an east-west or south-east to north-west pattern increasing in altitude and concentration. Consequently, movement along a north-south axis is more difficult than east-west. Most regions enjoyed access to one another by mountain passes which were narrow, steep, and easily closed by heavy precipitation. Both mountain passes and rivers dictate specific areas suitable for crossing by military highways or trade routes. Thus travel, communication, and any sort of action on all but the smallest scale was strenuous and almost entirely governed by the conditions of geography. This information must be kept in mind when applying physical geography to historical events, especially military action.

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[7] C. Toumanoff (1963) 37-8.
[8] N. Adontz (1970) 305.
[9] K. W. Deutch (1964) 110.
[10] ibid, 111.

The northern torrents which cut down the Pontic slopes into the Black Sea made coastal land transportation laborious and encouraged the development of maritime routes, especially throughout the spring and early summer when flooding could sweep away bridges and entire settlements. Of the rivers of the coastal interior only the lower course of the Acampsis (Çoruh), from roughly the fortified stronghold of Ercani to the river's mouth at Batum, was navigable. With the exception of the Cyrus, which for three hundred miles is navigable downstream from Yevlakh near Mingchaur, the Caucasus rivers are too dangerous.

In respect to the two northern branches of the Euphrates, the upper Euphrates (Kara Su) and the Arsanias (Murad), limited navigation to Melitene was possible on inflated skin rafts known as keleks. From Erzincan on the upper Euphrates, when the weather is clement, downstream travel is feasible. Similarly, on the Arsanias, a skilled pilot could manage the course from Palu. However, the bend south of Melitene still prevents all but the most daring travellers, and could not be used safely or with regularity at any point during the year. With the exception of a handful of small isolated valleys, the course of the Euphrates from Melitene to Samosata ran through deeply carved banks and thwarted the establishment of all but precarious land routes. Nor is it fordable at any point until one reaches Zeugma, with perhaps the exception at Tille.[11] Small craft may safely begin to navigate the river after Samosata, but it is not until reaching Dura Europos that one finds conditions suitable for a trading post.[12]

On the Tigris from Amida east and south, transportation by kelek is well attested and less formidable than any stretch of the upper Euphrates. However, after the confluence with the Nymphius, the river winds into a gorge and the current increases. Great skill was required to manage transport from here until Cizre, where the river again widens. Whoever controlled the gorge along this stretch had the power to impede, if not entirely stop, movement along the Tigris.

Passage over the Caucasus range was largely restricted to two main routes: First, one through the central Darial pass and descending on Tiflis;

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[11] D.H. French, J. Moore and H. F. Russell (1982) 161, 168-70.

[12] The Roman Euphrates fleet was known to operate above Dura-Europos, but this was only for exceptional reasons, see V. Chapot (1907) 145-9 and C. Starr (1960) 125.

this was not the only breach, but one of the few not perpetually blocked with snow: Second, the Darbend pass, less of a pass than a corridor between the mountains and the Caspian Sea was broad enough for considerable migration. Travel along the eastern Black Sea was possible, but arduous due to the closeness of the mountains to the sea shore. As along the Pontic coast, rugged terrain spurred maritime communications.

Once the Caucasus mountains had been negotiated, it was possible to continue onto the Iranian plateau via the Caspian coast or the Urmia basin. The ease of this south-eastern passage often distracted migrating forces from the only route penetrating the Armenian highlands: from the Araxes valley via the Kars plain and thence east toward Erzurum, or south to the upper Araxes valley.

From the Black Sea three routes into eastern Anatolia are significant: the first runs from the plain of Themiscyra near Samsun up the Lycus (Kelkit) river valley continuing to Bayburt, or breaking to the south-east near Susehiri and continuing to Erzincan: Second, from Trapezus through the Zigana pass and thence south-east via Gümüshane to Kelkit or Bayburt: Or finally, from Batum, then up the Acampsis valley and thence to Bayburt connecting with the previous routes.

Along the east-west axis there were two natural routes: one in the north which crossed the southern slopes of Mount Ararat via Agri to the Delibaha pass, thence to Erzurum and along the upper Euphrates toward Sivas: Another, in the south-east, passed the shores of Lake Urmia through the Kotur valley, around Lake Van, across the Muç plain, and down the Arsanias valley to the Euphrates crossings near Melitene. From Melitene three routes could be taken west: south west toward Maras: west to Caesarea: or north-west to Sebasteia.

From the south the routes were more challenging, usually forcing most movement east, below the Tur 'Abdin toward Nisibis. One ran parallel with the Tigris on the east, and passed Cizre continuing either to Siirt, or to Midyat and thence Hasankeyf; both brought entry to the upper Tigris plain. A second route from Azerbaijan snakes through the Hakkari mountains along the Cingulsaya river valley to Siirt via Sirnak. Once within the upper Tigris basis, entrance to the Armenian highlands through the Taurus range could be gained by either the Bitlis pass, south-

west of Van, or through the Ergani, north-west of Amida. A lesser passage via Hani through to Genç is also feasible.

Finally, there are routes emanating from northern Mesopotamia which were not hindered so much by looming mountain ranges or their torrents, as by the inhospitable climate, lack of water, and limited areas of cultivation and settlement. Two major highways rose from lower Mesopotamia, both running parallel to the great rivers. The Euphrates land route began near Dura-Europos, where river traffic ceases, and thence north, astride the river to the various natural or man-made crossings. Very little water transport was used to move north along the Tigris, certainly not past Nineveh from whence the route continued alongside the Tigris, eventually cutting north-west along the upper Mesopotamian plain to Nisibis and thence west.

§ 3. Introduction to the Historical Section:

There are many methods of writing an historical introduction to the north-eastern frontier. As this thesis is interested in studying the ways in which the frontier was managed during the late antique period, it is helpful to look for recurring features of stability and instability during earlier time periods. Why was the frontier where it was during the late Roman period? Why was Ciscaucasia the main theatre of war? To work towards an understanding, certain very simple ideas have been borrowed from modern geopolitical studies.[13] First, it is accepted that the "primary and continuing problem of every state is how to bind together more or less separate and diverse areas into an effective whole."[14] A concrete definition of the state is not necessary; any polity-- foreign empire or domestic confederation-- is acceptable. The term "state", for the purposes of this study, does not apply to very broad cultural concepts such as eastern Mediterranean society, or for that matter Iranian. What determines the success of a polity to unify a region is the triumph of centripetal over centrifugal forces. Centrifugal forces tend to disrupt territorial unity and cohesion and may be divided into two parts: physical (mountains, bodies

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[13] See the works of K.W Deutch, O.H.K Spate, and especially R. Hartshorne collected in W.A. D. Jackson (1964).

[14] R. Hartshorne (1964b) 86.

of water, distances) and human (differing socio-cultural levels, political systems, philosophies, economies, military aims). Conversely, centripetal forces promote union. Essentially, the underlying feature behind all centripetal forces is a sense of belonging to an organisation, generated by, for instance, national, economic, or religious loyalties, or the vision of a king or consular general. Only certain centripetal and centrifugal factors from each of the four historical periods will be highlighted. This is not the place for an exhaustive geopolitical study of the region. However, it is helpful to observe how Ciscaucasia came together and was pulled apart through the ages, both for putting this limited frontier study into a larger perspective, and to gain insight into some of the difficulties the Romans faced and how the land and history of the region encourage administration on a local level.

§ 4. The Urartian Period:

The first historical records of organised states in the frontier region come from rival civilisations.[15] Hittite annals of the fourteenth century record the campaign of king Tudhaliyas III against Karannis, king of the Hayasa, a people who occupied the area surrounding modern Erzincan, within much of what would later become *Armenia minor*. Within a few generations the Hittite royal family became blood relatives of the Hayasa through aristocratic marriages. Soon afterwards central Anatolian culture began penetration of Armenia and Caucasia. A century later, south of Lake Van, the king of Assyria, Shalmeneser I, waged war in the country of the Ururarti, a developing state surrounding Lake Van which the Assyrians would soon recognise and call Urartu. Over time, the assimilating power of war and inter-marriage would loosely weave Hayasa and Urartu into the ancient polity of Armenia.

For over four hundred years (circa 1275-840 B.C.) the Assyrians pursued a ruthless conflict with the Nairi, or river land chieftains, whose small realms embraced the headwaters of the upper Euphrates, Tigris and Araxes. The most powerful of these kingdoms, Urartu, occupied the banks

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[15] A narration of the period and examination of the sources can be found in A.H. Sayce (1925) and M. Chahin (1987) 31-200.

of the Arsanias and the northern and eastern shores of Lake Van. Under Urartian hegemony, the Nairi chieftains formed a fragile confederation to avoid enslavement or colonisation by the Assyrians.[16] However, some of these northern kingdoms did become clients of the Assyrians, and also enjoyed a stable existence under the hegemony of the southern empire. Two important aspects in the relationship between the Nairi chieftains and their northern or southern patrons should be noted.[17] First, diplomacy and administration were always conducted by local kings or by individuals on behalf of the kings; the relationship was not one between secular states, but between individuals. Second, the deployment of garrsions and the development of civic building projects, such as roads and irrigation channels increased the security and economic prosperity of the region. When the first documented king of Urartu, Arame, was overwhelmed by the Assyrians (circa 856 B.C.), a new dynasty arose to lead the Urartian confederation from their base at Tushpa (modern Van). In reaction to or imitation of reinvigorated Assyrian imperialism, the new Urartian kingdom focused resources and attention on military expansion in all directions but south. By the end of the ninth century Urartian conquests and consolidation stretched west to east from near Melitene eastward toward Tabriz, and north to south from Altintepe to Izolu (south of Lake Urmia). Continued expansion in the first half of the eighth century was contained by the kingdom of Qulha (Colchis) in the north, but the upper and middle Araxes fell to Urartian cultivation. In the south, the Urartian confederation virtually controlled the western Taurus mountains and crossed the Euphrates into northern Syria, depriving Assyria of raw materials and disrupting east-west commerce.

Urartian control of these caravans and metal trade eventually provoked revolution in Assyria. The military usurper Tiglath-pileser III assessed the situation and moved to retake the strategically important Euphrates crossing at Karchemish, regaining the trade routes. From the mid-eighth century, the Assyrians aimed at removing Urartu entirely as a near eastern rival, draining the resources of the two states through

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[16] C. Toumanoff (1963) 52.

[17] See J.N. Postgate (1992) 254-6 for a discussion of relationships between client kings and their overlords during this period.

increasingly ambitious military projects.[18] The Urartian king Rusas I (725-13 B.C.) attempted to consolidate and further enhance his position by campaigning against the Caucasian tribes. This was his undoing, for apart from committing his forces on several fronts, he so weakened his northern buffer, that when the nomadic Cimmerians burst through the Darial pass, Urartian forces were annihilated and their northern holdings stripped. The resolve of the Urartian confederation began to disintegrate under the weight of military failure, and by the beginning of the seventh century it was largely impotent.[19] Exhausted by wars and the predatory raids of the Cimmerians, both Assyria and Urartu were emasculated in the sixth century when the Babylonian-Median empire, in alliance with the Scyths, another nomadic tribe which had poured through the weakened Caucasian states, crushed them.

During the Urartian period, centripetal and centrifugal forces were initiated largely by external stimuli: the Nairi confederated in response to Assyrian aggression, and deteriorated when, under Urartian leadership, they failed to defend their territories, especially the Caucasus passes. A palace revolt flared up, supported by the Hyassa; many principalities, only unified to Urartu linguistically or culturally in part, defected, taking with them military and material resources. With the ebb of Urartian power, the region soon passed into Median and Persian hands.

§ 5. The Achaemenid Period:

Near the close of the seventh century, an Indo-European people, soon to be identified as the Armenians, made their first known appearance in eastern Anatolia, where they appear to have amalgamated with the Hyassa. Taking advantage of the decline of Urartu, they forced parts of the ancient populace out of the river valleys and into the highlands or eastward along the Araxes. In the wake of the Scythian and Cimmerian disruptions the Armenians were able to impose their lordship over the indigenous and recently migrated peoples. Yet they retained the

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[18] A.K. Grayson (1991) 74-77.

[19] M. Chahin (1987) 82-91 and 93-7 perceives an moderate Urartian recovery, but as A.H. Sayce (1925) 180-3 and A.K. Grayson (1991) 93-97 indicate, the confederacy was permanently damaged and Urartu became increasingly less influential in the region.

walled cities, irrigation systems, orchards and elements of Urartian statecraft, architectural knowledge, and literature, in short the stabilising influences of the earlier civilisation, even if in a weakened form.[20] However, the old confederation had either deteriorated to such an extent, or refused to support the Armenian ascendancy, that even with the advantages of Urartian culture, they were not able to achieve the same level of independence, and fell subject to first the Median and later the Achaemenid empire. Under Median suzerainty, the Urartian highlanders conducted perennial raids against the lowland Armenians, and it was only at the behest of Cyrus the Great that a fragile peace was imposed upon the region in the mid-sixth century B.C..[21] Persia drew tribute from the Armenians and safeguarded the interests of the Urartians, or Alarodians, as they were now called. In return the highlanders agreed to cease their banditry, share upland pastures, and rent out lowland fields. But a tension between the low and highland cultures continued to exist, witnessed by the mountain castles which deterred further Armenian expansion.[22]

Any effort by a state to improve lines of communication will result in the promotion of centripetal forces which bring together the diverse elements of a society. The ability of the Achaemenids to maintain a Royal road, the main branches of which ran from Sardis and Colchis to Susa, encouraged the further bonding of Anatolian and Caucasian society. Not only was a fortified corridor necessary to spur international commerce and facilitate military deployment in the pursuit of imperial security, but also the guarantee of safe passage encouraged local economies in adjacent regions where benefits would follow with the development of capillary routes radiating from the main highway.[23] Likewise, lesser dynasts and landowners, who stood to profit by the expansion of trade found it in their interests to protect routes and discourage disruptive elements within their domain.

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[20] C. Burney and D.M. Lang (1971) 173-80.
[21] Xen., *Cyrop.*, 32; H.A. Manandian (1965) 26-7.
[22] Herod., 3.94; C. Burney (1957) 37-54.
[23] Herod., 5.52; H.A. Manandian (1965) 23-25.

Darius' reorganisation of his northern provinces betrays the difficulties he encountered in controlling the region.[24] Four separate satrapies were devised to administer eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus. The thirteenth satrapy contained the Armenians, the Pactyans, and "people beyond as far as the Euxine Sea". The Alarodians and the proto-Georgian Matieni and Saspeiri comprised the eighteenth. Five separate tribes which dwelt along the coastal strip between the Black Sea and Pontic Alps were grouped as the nineteenth. Equally numerous were those tribes along the Caspian shores and in Azerbaijan grouped together under the eleventh. Over each province was imposed a Persian or native satrap, but local government, by and large, was assigned to village chieftains. These chieftains, were great land owners and were personally responsible for levying troops and paying tribute to the Persian king. The satrapal office was hereditary, but otherwise the responsibilites of each leader varied widely and allowed a large amount of local initiative.[25] Herodotus and Xenophon both indicate that the Ciscaucasia was ethnically mixed and only tenuously unified. The thirteenth satrapy represented the Armenian sphere of control, located in the headwater valleys of the Euphrates and Tigris; whereas the eighteenth, in the mountains east and south of Van, indicated that the older Urartian or Alarodian domain remained unassimilated. Numerous and recalcitrant tribes below the Caspians fell into the nineteenth and eleventh. In Darius' time they paid tribute collectively, but if the ancient commentators on linguistic history are believed, they were highly diversified.[26] The Colchians, beyond any satrapal pale, offered only gifts to the Great King. By Xenophon's day the unity of many sectors was even weaker. In the Zagros ranges between the Armenians and the Alarodians, the Kardouchi carved out an independent kingdom, later to become the Gordyene of the Roman period. Efforts by the Persians to control this mountainous locality cost the king one hundred and twenty thousand men. However, the satrap who controlled the encompassing plains was able to pressure the Kardouchi into a more

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[24] On Darius' reorganisation of the Achaemenid empire see Herod., 3.89-94; C. Burney and D.M. Lang (1971) 180-5; and J.M. Cook (1983) 77-90.
[25] J.M. Cook (1983) 171-82.
[26] J.M. Cook (1982) 257.

peaceful co-existence.[27] But the years of warfare between highlander and lowlander had left the valley around the Centrites river an uninhabitable zone. North of the river, the Chaldeans, another branch of the old Urartian populace are also stated as being free and belligerent. Armenia itself, viewed as one geographical district by Xenophon, is still divided into two zones of control: the old Alarodian under Orontes, a son-in-law to the Persian king, and the maturing western Armenia under the king's ally Tiribazus.[28] Throughout the Pontic Alps appear people effectively independent of Persian control: the Phasians, Chalybes, and Taochi. Yet the latter two, though not subjects of Armenia, are found as mercenaries amongst Tiribazus' troops.[29] Along the coast itself some unbowed Macrones, Scytheni, Drilae mingled with expanding Greek colonies to form further separate polities, while others fiercely cherished their freedom.

The main centripetal factor of the Achaemenid period, the Royal road system, improved the material well-being of Ciscaucasia. Increased contact with powers to the south transmitted ideas of centralisation. To a limited extent, the Achaemenid satrapies directly introduced measures such as taxation and troop levying which encouraged a higher degree of social organisation. However, evidence indicates that Ciscaucasia was still too ethnically mixed to form a single cohesive society. The tension between highland and lowland often resulted in armed conflict, and the apparent absence of flourishing civic centres prevented long term stability or political unity from appearing.

§ 6. The Hellenistic Period:

In the final years of Achaemenid power both the Royal road system and the internal security of the empire began to deteriorate. Although the Macedonians, and in particular the Seleucids, were unable to re-establish fully a garrisoned corridor along the entire old road system,[30] the need to

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[27] Xen., *Cyrop.*, 3.5.
[28] Xen., *Anab.*, 4.4; see also Herod., 3.89-90; and J.M. Cook (1983) 197.
[29] Xen., *Anab.*, 4.4.
[30] W.W. Tarn and G.T. Griffith (1952) 130, 243-44; Rostovtzeff (1928) 174-5; Musti (1984) 184.

The trade routes which led up through Media Atropatene into Albania, Iberia, and Colchis were already well-established by the time of the Macedonian conquest. Furthermore, Colchis had long been furnishing the western Greeks with fish, metals, raw materials, precious merchandise, and slaves.[39] Phasis and Dioscurias, the main emporia on the east coast of the Black Sea, had already developed civic institutions along Greek lines. Consequently their economics and socio-political order had reached a more sophisticated stage than Iberia or Albania. The development of northern Mesopotamian trade routes increased, the importance of Colchis lessened in certain commodities such as luxury goods and grain. However, military activities demanded a constant supply of metals ensuring continued foreign investment into the region.[40] Hence the Black Sea had become less of barrier than a point of contact with external powers.

Ciscaucasian political powers derived substantially increased political mobility with the destruction of the Achaemenid empire, and the reluctance of the Seleucid rulers to interfere in lands north of the Taurus range.[41] With the enervation of the satrapal system in the north, former governors were able to declare themselves kings and undertake territorial expansion, which was to a degree prohibited under the Achaemenids. Such was the case with the hereditary Armenian Satrap, Orontes II, who, in spite of supporting Darius at Gaugamela, returned to Greater Armenia where he asserted his authority as self-styled king of Armenia.[42] Orontes was succeeded by his son Mithranes, who had loyally served the Macedonian war effort and received an appointment to govern Armenia for Alexander.[43] However, this office resulted in nominal fealty, and the Orontids ruled Armenia suffering brief Seleucid interference until their deposition not by Greeks, but by their internal rivals the Artaxiads, in the early second century.

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[39] M. Rostovtzeff (1941) 586.
[40] M. Rostovtzeff (1941) 586-87.
[41] D. Musti (1984) 188.
[42] Arrian, *Anab.*, 3.8.5; C. Toumanoff (1963) 289; W.W. Tarn (1953) 464.
[43] Arrian, *Anab.*, 1.17.3; 3.16.5.

Increased political freedom effected under the Orontids did much to promote the territorial unification of Ciscaucasia.[44] The old satrapy of western Armenia had expanded its power at the expense of the Alarodians. Their overlordship was justified partially by pure military aggression, but more importantly by the combined authority of the claim to Achaemenid descent and a renewed sanction from Alexander. Further, Orontid Armenia soon gained control of the budding trade cities. For two decades after the death of Alexander, the successor states virtually ignored sovereign Armenia, until in 301 nominal suzerainty was imposed by Seleucus I.[45] However this was not achieved without the assistance of the newly formed kingdom of Iberia, regional opponent of Armenia.[46] Like Armenia, Iberia, where the various tribes of the Cyrus valley fused together under the hegemony of the Pharnabasids, enjoyed a brief period of unchecked expansion.

Furthermore, emulation of Hellenistic cities, and by association their culture, institutions, and technical skill, also stimulated unification and stability of the region. In some respects just as the flourishing municipalities throughout the Seleucid period were as much a return to the former urban might of the ancient Near East as they were a novelty, so too the growth of cities in Armenia was a restoration of Urartian glory.[47] Numerous towns appear between the late third and early first century, many of which were organised and adorned in Hellenistic style. For their beauty, some elicited the comments of classical authors. What is important here is that such cities both unified the region and acted as points of dissemination for Hellenistic values. The cities, especially the Royal capitals, brought the aristocracy away from their disparate towns and entwined them in the increasingly centralised bureaucracy of developing Ciscaucasian polities. Obviously the major stimuli for Armenia radiated from the south-west. However, the proto-Georgian communities were influenced largely by the Greek presence along the Black Sea, in particular by Milesian colonisers. The indigenous Colchian population seemed to have rapidly amalgamated with Greek settlers, and towns quickly

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[44] C. Toumanoff (1963) 71-74; 277-351.
[45] D. Musti (1984) 183-4.
[46] C. Toumanoff (1963) 80-81.
[47] A.L. Oppenheim (1964) 74-142; C. Burney and D. Lang (1971) 188.

appeared on the coast and in the interior.[48] Yet the western mountains and malarial terrain limited growth and little is known of their early political structure.[49] In general, Iberians moved down from the craggy settlements to found well fortified centers along river banks.[50] If the legend preserved in the Georgian annals contains elements of truth in attributing the social, political, and military reorganisation of early Georgia to Alexander the Great, then perhaps Iberia underwent a process of centralisation similar to Armenia.[51]

Growing centralisation and territorial consolidation resulted in increased linguistic and cultural homogeneity both in Iberia and Armenia.[52] Although these two larger areas remained linguistically divided through their history, each achieved linguistic dominance amongst the majority of their own populace by the beginning of the second century B.C.. The penetration of the Greek language amongst Caucasian aristocrats drew the powers further into the thought world of the west. In addition to the presence of Hellenistic *litterati*, it was not uncommon to find the performance of Greek plays or even original works in the royal courts.[53]

On the other hand, facets of Hellenism also destabilised the region; and these elements of destabilisation proved greater than the centripetal forces. Although it has been claimed that Alexander set out to establish a united empire of Greeks and Iranian brothers, the end result, as seen in succeeding Hellenistic kingdoms, betrays naked imperialism fully imbued with anti-eastern prejudices.[54] Between 334-24 B.C., Alexander and his successors brought the disparate communities of the Achaemenid empire under at least nominal Greek suzerainty. Although Alexander mixed Iranian customs with his own, and Iranian peoples amongst his noble families, army, and bureaucracy, it was only philosophers who vocalised a coherent concept of world citizenship, a concept which was never pursued

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[48] O.D. Lortkipanidze (1966) 49-79.
[49] C. Toumanoff (1963) 84-5.
[50] C. Burney and D. Lang (1971) 194.
[51] C.Burney and D. Lang (1971) 195-6.
[52] C. Toumanoff (1963) 74.
[53] Plutarch, *Crassus* 33; S. Der Nersessian (1969) 80-81.

[54] E. Badian (1958) 425-41 and A.B. Bosworth (1980).

by his successors. This is not to suggest that a cosmopolitan culture does not emerge among sectors of the population. But it is not a planned culture. In fact, more often than not, several factors prevented blending between East and West. The Macedonian communities throughout the east were there to carve out a profitable existence for themselves as conquerors, not liberators or missionaries. Greek artistic influences, for example, are hard to find outside the archaeological remains of cities. These Macedonian establishments were for the most part built as a bastion of Hellenism against the engulfing flood of alien cultures. The Macedonians throughout the period imposed a cultural isolation upon themselves, largely to filter out undesirable or contrary influences. Those who did pass through this screen predominantly belonged to two groups: the independent rulers and the conquered local magnates. The former "went Greek" for the sake of advancement in a world where the outlets of power fell increasingly into the hands of the Macedonians and their descendants. The latter chose to collaborate with their overlords by utilising their talents as interpreters so essential to the administration of the Greek empires. When and where there was an infusion of culture it happened for pragmatic reasons. Greek, for example, was adopted as the common tongue to facilitate diplomacy and economic interchange. Demographically and ethnically among the lower strata of society there was more interchange, but collectively the lower classes were shunned for social reasons by those elites who would later most influence the Roman vision of the East. At the centre of these Hellenistic islands was the educational system. Largely consistent across the conquered territories, and like most colonial institutions, a crystalised microcosm of the motherland, the Gymnasium was the proper ground to be nursed on Hellenic ideals.[55] This mechanism of education existed and functioned in face of a hostile world, perhaps literally in spite of it. It aimed to produce cultured individuals boldly distinct from the surrounding barbarians. A group striving for power inevitably attempts to compel those who wish to participate in the command of a society into adopting habits, institutions, and modes of communication similar to their own if not homogenous.[56]

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[55]On Greek and subsequent Roman educational practices see H.I. Marrou (1977); on Greek education as a citadel against eastern barbarism see P. Green (1990) 319ff.

[56] K.W. Deutsch (1964b) 117.

The very process of unification may endanger a region if the upper strata of society alienate themselves from the dissenting or politically non-participatory classes. In perpetuating a largely exclusive culture, the Seleucids effectively marginalised Ciscaucasia from greater union with Syria or Mesopotamia. Similarly, by adopting Greek habits, the Ciscaucasian aristocracy introduced a new tool which could be used against them to divide just as effectively as to unite society.

§ 7. The Roman Period:

Roman conquest and consolidation of the East owed much to the ideas and efforts of Pompey.[57] The Ciscausian kingdoms were at the centre of his organisation of the East, and successive Roman leaders continued his policy of developing a protectorate over these clients in the face of competition from both the Parthian and Sasanian Persians.[58] Lines of communication and centres of control were both developed and improved in the long-settled Seleucid holdings, but also expanded in underdeveloped areas of Ciscaucasia. Just as the Seleucid rulers had adopted the Achaemenid road system to meet their needs, so too did the Romans; but pre-Roman routes were only a foundation for an enduring and elaborate system which outstripped its predecessors in its ability to channel resources throughout the region.[59] Under the Flavians a comprehensive period of military construction was undertaken, which is worthy of special attention.[60] With the annexation of Commagene, the river crossing at Samosata came under direct Roman jurisdiction. Legionary fortresses were established along the two natural east-west routes into Armenia at Melitene and Satala. A single fortified road system followed from Trapezus to northern Syria. This improved line of communication both put an end to serious logistical problems posed to

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[57] A narration of the period and examination of the sources can be found in M.L. Chaumont (1976) 71-94.

[58] On Pompey's strategy see A.N. Sherwin-White (1984) 195-203. E. Dabrowa (1989) and E.W. Gray (1973) 33ff., both stress Pompey's importance in shaping Rome's policy in Ciscaucasia throughout the high and late empire.

[59] D.H. French (1980) 698-729, (1988) 71-101; A. Bryer and D. Winfield (1985) 24-47, for Pontic roads.

[60] For the monumental remains see T.B. Mitford (1980) 1183-94.

operations in the area and allowed Roman troops, which would facilitate easy diplomatic military pressure to be applied to Ciscaucasian kingdoms, to be deployed in positions along the Euphrates. Contemporary with construction aside the Euphrates, are a number of fortified harbours between Trapezus and Dioscurias, set at intervals of one day's cruise.[61] With Cappadocia and the Black Sea routes under direct supervision, lawlessness was curbed and local economies improved.[62] Furthermore, public construction was undertaken in the heart of the Ciscaucasian kingdoms.[63] A fort at Gorneae near the Armenian capital of Artaxata was built in A.D. 51, with a re-installation in A.D. 76, and another garrison was installed at Harmozica. Gorneae commanded the Araxes valley, Harmozica guarded the Darial pass and the upper Cyrus. Other building projects are also indicated by both archaeological and textual evidence.[64] Some scholars have viewed north-eastern construction as a response to the Armenian wars under Nero, or a desire for a secure frontier.[65] Roman efforts were expansionist, but it is still debatable whether they were simply opportunistic or part of a "grand strategy".[66] The scale of Flavian and later development, both civic and military, is too widespread to support a thesis which offers personal greed as the primary mover behind imperial policies.[67] In the East, city foundation appears to be limited, and is taken by some as indicative of the meanness of imperial administrators, administrators who stuck to military investment and shirked the burden of urban development.[68] However, this interpretation views the East in isolation from the rest of the empire. Whereas city development in western provinces was massive, the East required redistribution of wealth and peripheral development.[69] The great cities of the eastern

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61 T.B. Mitford (1980) 1192-4; B. Isaac 46-50.

62 F. Cumont (1923) 109-227; Bosworth (1976) 73; D.C. Braund (1989) 38-9.

63 T.B. Mitford (1980) 1192-4; B. Isaac (1990)46-50.

64 T.B. Mitford (1980) ibid.

65 See B. Isaac (1990) 50, nn. 205 and 206.

66 B. Isaac (1990) 51; 372-3. I shall return to this question in chapter five.

67 G.W. Bowersock (1973) 133-40.

68 B. Isaac (1990) 333-71. However, it is understandable, given the urban development of the East, that the military would establish a presence in the cities, see N. Hodgson (1989) 178-81.

69 P. Garnsey and R. Saller (1987) 32; M. Fulford (1992) 302.

Mediterranean were already highly developed; public expenditure was met by the Liturgical system.[70] This institution permitted city magistrates to compete *via* the development of their own community. For the imperial government to interfere would have ruined pre-existing power structures, raised taxes, and weakened local economies.[71] Far from being miserly, the imperial government was simply nurturing civic structures in such a way as to maximize overall economic benefits without disrupting the essentially localised and highly differentiated economies of the empire.[72]

In addition to caring for monumental structures along the frontier, it was equally, if not more important, for Roman leaders to cultivate power structures beyond the Euphrates.[73] Assuring the success of pro-Roman rulers in Armenia was essential to Rome's imperial policy in Ciscaucasia. Such support results in an inevitable bonding between elites at the center and their peripheral counter parts. Relations of this sort were bond to take on a personal tone, and the success or failure of the one partner effected the status of the other. Obviously, the relationship was meant to benefit both parties, yet create a dependency on the Roman patron. This can be seen throughout Rome's involvement in Ciscaucasia. For instance, after Pompey obtained the captivity of the young Tigran and the dissolution of his kingdom in Sophene, the elder Tigran was placed back on the throne of Greater Armenia. So long as he remained steadfast in his loyalty to Rome, his disruptive son would be absent from the region.[74] However, the client/patron relationship was not one sided. For example, in remaining beholden to Crassus or Anthony, the kings of Armenia pinned their hopes to Roman successes which would allow them to exert their own political influence over neighbouring rivals in Albania or Media.[75] Unfortunately, both cases ended in failure. Without rewards, the client would seek a new patron, and in these two cases Armenia shifted allegiance to Parthia. However, such set-backs could not

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[70] A.H.M. Jones (1940).
[71] P. Garnsey and R. Saller (1987) 32-4; G.Woolf (1992) 283-93.
[72] P. Garnsey (1974).
[73] D.C. Braund (1984) 75-85.
[74] Appian, *Mith.*, 105.
[75] Plutarch, *Pompey* 36.

disrupt the continued cultivation of peripheral elites. So long as pro-Roman elements existed in Ciscaucasia, there would be a sharing of interests between some eastern and western nobles. The practice of taking hostages was aimed at perpetuating a supply of pro-Roman supporters to export into foreign kingdoms, or simply to be used as a threat.[76]

The policies of legionary recruitment and veteran settlement were further contributions to regional stability. Legionary recruitment was an essential feature in Roman territorial consolidation, having as its primary aim the removal of potentially dangerous elements from society and their transformation into a loyal arm of imperial institutions.[77] The contribution of such manpower not only lessened local brigandage, but strengthened the ties between the various peripheral areas of the empire.[78] By the middle of the first century soldiers were already being recruited along the Euphrates frontier, and throughout the second and third centuries the presence of such eastern recruits is documented as far west as Vindobono (Vienna) and as far south as Nicopolis.[79] Twenty-five years of service actively supporting the urban network of Rome must have imbued the rank and file with a sense of affiliation, if not to civic institutions, than at least to the emperor and his army.[80] Those legionaries who returned to their homes could look forward to an increased social and economic position in their communities.[81] Even when veterans were not colonised *en bloc*, which does not seem to be the case along the Euphrates, the integration of individuals from the frontier into imperial structures created a client-patron relationship which continued to be cultivated when the retired soldier returned to a prominent place in his community. The eastern campaigns of Verus and Severus resulted in numerous colonies beyond the Euphrates. The veteran settlements of Mesopotamia developed in the cities along the central route from Antioch to Nisibis.[82] Even if the theory that colonies

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[76] A.D. Lee (1991b) 366-8; D.C. Braund (1984) 12-16.
[77] B. Isaac (1990) 59.
[78] M.P. Speidel (1980) 730-744.
[79] ibid.
[80] B.D. Shaw (1983) 14-8.
[81] R. MacMullen (1963) chp. 5; J.B. Cambell (1984) 181ff.
[82] A.H.M. Jones (1971) 221-22.

such as these were not part of a conscious defensive policy,[83] veterans and their families supported local government, cultivated the land, paid taxes, and often provided sons for military service.[84]

Roman activities in the East did not always result in regional stability, even if they did promote certain centripetal factors as in the resulting unification of Armenia under the Arsacids. The Roman state had clearly established strong diplomatic contacts in the East, as well as gained legitimacy in the minds of Hellenistic monarchs.[85] Initially, Rome's friendship did much to stabilise the power struggles in the east, as when Ptolemaios IV entrusted his son to Lepidus for protection and education, so countering Seleucid advances against Egypt. Through such clients and friends Rome was drawn into the East, learned eastern ways, and in turn dominated the Hellenistic world.[86] But the long-term ambition of Rome was not to provide stability or create a balance of power for the Hellenistic or eastern monarchies, but to sap their strength one by one and conquer them.[87] With rare exception this aim can be illustrated in Roman actions throughout Ciscaucasia from the period of their arrival until the rise of the Sasanians. It must be kept in mind that instability in Ciscaucasia may have resulted in security for the Roman provinces, and it certainly increased the opportunity for further conquest. Yet in many respects the pursuit of such a policy ensured that continued and increased commitment would be necessary along the Armenian frontier.

Rome exercised a policy of deployment aggressive in intent, even during periods of apparent peace. The third war against Mithridates is a case in point.[88] Denied westward expansion, Pontus turned toward the Crimea, while Rome built up a strong military presence in Cilicia and Cappadocia, gaining control of the passes which led in Pontus. Mithridates' suspicions were further fueled when the senate refused to ratify Sulla's agreement not to intervene in Pontic affairs. The result of this escalation was five years of warfare which, in the end, spilled into

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[83] As is held by numerous scholars, but questioned in B. Isaac (1990) 310-32.
[84] P. Garnsey and R. Saller (1987) 77 and 124; B. Isaac 332.
[85] A.N. Sherwin-White (1984) 58-79.
[86] D.C. Braund (1984) 9ff; F.W. Walbank (1984), esp. 66-71.
[87] Polyb., 3.32.7; P.S. Derow (1979); contra F.W. Walbank (1963).
[88] For a treatment of Roman and Pontic escaltion up see D.G. Glew (1981).

Armenia. Furthermore, an offensive stance was clearly used to dissuade the Parthians and their allies from supporting their own clients. In spite of Parthia's entreaties for a peaceful solution, Republican commanders carefully used treatises backed by hostile deployment to intimidate their rival.[89] Later during the principate, when Mithridates, an Iberian client of Tiberius, moved to take possession of the Armenian throne, the Syrian governor neutralised Parthian counter-measures by advancing first against the Euphrates, and then into northern Mesopotamia. Battle was never met, yet the belligerent stance cowed Armenia and Iberia into peaceful submission, while Parthian opposition evaporated. Such intimidation continued under Claudius with the construction of the garrison at Gorneae, and the instalment of an entire legion at Zeugma. Increased militarisation of the region precipitated a Parthian response. In order to sustain Parthian credibility, Vologaeses seized the two great cities of Tigranocerta and Artaxata, aiming to install his young brother. Initially Parthia failed, but after two more years of war and diplomacy a Parthian client was installed. So the cycle was renewed. For over a decade Rome and Parthia wrestled over the Ciscaucasian kingdoms, until Corbulo sought to establish a *detente* with Vologaeses at Rhandeia. But Corbulo's peaceful solution of a Parthian ruler under Roman suzerainty should be taken neither as indicative of the emperor's wishes, nor typical of Roman ideology.[90] Nero entertained impressive plans for Roman expansion throughout the Caucasian lands.[91] The Flavian build-up has already been discussed in so far as the stabilising effects it had on the region. However, the overall scheme of Roman positions indicates one which planned for further aggression.[92] Clearly, Trajan's Armenian and Parthian campaigns illustrate the ease with which a Roman commander could launch an attack. In the middle of the second century Parthia again attempted to reassert support for her clients in Armenia, and made raids across the Syrian border, but achieved little. Neither Rome nor Persia could brook any lasting presence of the other in Armenia or northern Mesopotamia.

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[89] For a discussion of the use and abuse of treaties by Sulla, Lucullus, and Pompey see A. Keaveney (1981) and (1982).
[90] M. Hammond (1934).
[91] B.W. Henderson (1903) 226-8; A.B. Bosworth (1976) 73-75; M. Griffin (1984) 228.
[92] B. Isaac (1990) 41.

Each empire strove to wrest supremacy from the other. However, Parthia did not appear to have the material resources to undertake military deployment on the same scale as Rome. Instead, she took recourse to desultory raids which never had any real territorial aims.[93] Roman leaders, on the other hand, consistently embarked on enlarged conquests beyond the Euphrates, where and when possible.[94] As such, stability was dificult to maintain in the region. The Ciscaucasian kingdoms were ever the goal of Roman imperialism. As long as there was any resistance to Roman integration, sooner or later, it was met with a military response. Parthia was confined largely to predatory attacks when the Roman guard was down. By the end of the second and beginning of the third century the Roman response was to terminate the Parthian threat entirely. The plundering of Ctesiphon (A.D. 198) and expedition of Caracalla (A.D. 215-17) ultimately left southern Mesopotamia sufficiently destabilized to allow the rise of the Sasanians.

The territorial advances undertaken by Trajan (A.D. 114-117), Verus (A.D. 163-6), and Severus (A.D. 197-9) were made possible, indeed anticipated by Flavian preparations.[95] Although the annexation of Greater Armenia was abandoned, the ease with which the country was overrun in A.D. 114 and again in 163 underlines the successful deployment of Roman troops and the facility both for exerting pressure on the hinterland and expelling Parthian supporters. Both Trajan and Severus clearly intended to seal off entry into Armenia via the Zagros range and deprive Parthia of all influence in Ciscaucasia.[96] Severus' development of the towns and colonies in northern Mesopotamia insured that the region would require continual attention. If Armenia was to be absorbed along traditional lines Iranian access would have to be limited. Roman interests in the lands north of the Taurus mountains depended on a steady southern bulwark. Thus pro-Roman elements throughout Ciscaucasia were tied together politically, economically, and militarily in regional security.

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[93] B. Isaac (1990) 21-2; 50-2.
[94] B. Isaac (1990) 19-53.
[95] A.B. Bosworth (1976) 78.
[96] C.S. Lightfoot (1990) 118.

§ 8. Conclusions:

Each successive power in Ciscaucasia inherited not only many of the benefits, but often the problems of former rulers. Geographical conditions dictated settlement patterns and channels of communication. The rugged terrain of the region impeded easy consolidation, and the numerous mountain valleys encouraged the development of highly localised economies and cultures. Efforts at controlling and administering Ciscaucasia had to take into account the variety of people, settlements, and environmental conditions. In examining the centrifugal and centripetal factors at play in the North-East, several general observations can be made. First, administration, and often diplomacy, were conducted *via* local representatives of a foreign power. Each imperial state employed client rulers drawn from regional nobility. Friendly satraps or former hostages were at the top of local administration, and consequently defence. Second, building projects and improved lines of communication brought greater unification and economic prosperity to Ciscaucasia. In each period, frontier security was obtained when governments constructed new roads or irrigation systems, introduced coinage, established garrisons, or, developed urban centres. Third, taxation and recruitment policies encouraged a higher degree of social organisation, and brought large portions of the population into contact with respective imperial systems. In these early periods, effective control of provinces or satrapies was obtained when the most was made of local rulers. In the next chapter, I shall examine how such effective local management continued along an important section of the north-east frontier, and in particular, how local communities were responsible for defending their immediate region.

The Defences and Settlements of the Armenian frontier

§ 1. Introduction:

This chapter examines the most prominent Roman settlements and fortifications south of Colchis and north of the Tur 'Abdin. It is not an attempt to form an exhaustive gazeteer of all Roman sites along the Armenian frontier, but instead examines the histories of important sites in order to understand how the frontier was defended on a local level and what role frontier cities played in protecting the interests of the empire.

§ 2. The upper Tigris basin: Martyropolis and Amida:

Martyropolis, modern Silvan, lies approximately seventy-five kilometres north-east of Amida along the old Diyarbakir-Bitlis road.[1] The fortress-city was well-placed to monitor the main routes from Amida into Armenia, and east-west traffic within the limits of the Taurus range and the Tur 'Abdin. Martyropolis is located on the southernmost slope of the Hazro range, overlooking the undulating plain of the upper Tigris, at a site blessed with a good water supply. The Farkin-Su cuts just to the west, rushing twelve miles to the south-east until it meets the ancient Nymphius (Batman-Su), the river which divided Roman-controlled Sophanene from Persian Arzanene. The city's fertile surroundings are nourished by numerous springs. The various mountain streams which drain from the Taurus into the Nymphius allowed for the development of several routes from the north which converge near Martyropolis.[2] Two routes descend from the northwest near Muç, following the valleys of the Kulp Çay and Aydinlik Çay. Northwest of Martyropolis, a third route traverses the mountains near Genç and moves south to Lice, thence bends south-east along the upper waters of the Nymphius behind the Hazro hills. Finally, the city lies along the main route to the Bitlis pass, the least

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1 *EI* (2) 928 for the topography of the site.

2 H.A. Manandian (1965) 24-25,62, 102-3 for a discussion of the important strategic and trade routes that passed through or near Martyropolis.

difficult entrance from the upper Tigris basin into the Armenian plateau.[3] Twenty-five miles to the south flows the Tigris, beside which, in the Achaemenid period, the Royal road ran east then south into Mesopotamia.

There has been long debate as to whether the site of Martyropolis is also the site of the ancient Armenian capital of Tigranocerta.[4] Martyropolis was the central city of the district of Sophanene, or Cop'k' Mec in Armenian sources. Sophanene had been controlled by a Roman client since the reign of Diocletian, after the the Persians formally relinquished the territory under the Peace of Nisibis of A.D. 298.[5] For a time, the hereditary Armenian Satraps of Sophanene held considerable autonomy. Roman troops may have been present in Sophanene, but an Armenian never commanded them. However, Satraps were entitled to wage wars with their own forces independent of imperial jurisdiction.[6] In the middle of the following century, the Satrap of Sophanene supported the Romans during the peace of A.D. 363, when the Nymphius was selected as the border between Roman and Persian spheres of control; but this choice was viewed by contemporaries as deviation from the traditional pro-eastern sympathies of the district.[7] In the fifth century, the emperor Zeno increased the checks placed on the Armenian Satraps after they had lent support to the rebels Leontius and Illus. Hereditary Satrapies were put to an end, and the office became one solely by appointment.[8] However, these rulers were still not permitted to command Roman garrisons. During times of invasion this division of civil and military authority proved disastrous. In A.D. 536 Justinian abolished the Satrapy of Sophanene and combined it with other districts into the province of *Armenia IV*.[9] Shortly before this date, in A.D. 527,

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3 L.M. Whitby (1983) 205.

4*EI* (2) 928-9 provides a bibliography of the previous scholarship concerning the location of Tigranocerta.

5 Peter the Patrician, *Leg. ad. gen.*, 3.

6 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.1.24.

7 Faust. Buz., 4.1.

8 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.1.26.

9 *Nov.*, 31; Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.1.27-9.

Martyropolis must have become a key military point, with the seat of a *Dux Armeniae*, and received the upgraded defences still visible.[10]

The foundation of Martyropolis as a centre of importance to Romans and Christians dates to the early fifth century, when traditional Armenian command structures were beginning to be limited. Both Greek and Semitic sources attribute the city's establishment to an Armenian bishop named Marutha, who came from the highlands north of Martyropolis.[11] While bishop he enjoyed imperial favour, and between A.D. 399 and 408 he was sent on several diplomatic missions to the Persians. During these missions, he so impressed king Yezdegerd by his piety and knowledge of medicine, that the Persian developed a respect for Christianity and assisted Marutha in his evangelical efforts.[12] Bishop Marutha effected an accord between the two rulers, who in return jointly helped to aggrandize the old Armenian city of Np'erkert with relics and funds for constructions. Yezdegerd ordered his Magi to surrender to the bishop the remains of those Christians martyred in Persia, and sent Marutha off with gold for the future basilica of the city. Theodosius II matched these offerings by sending further reliquaries and ordering that some of the best agricultural lands in Sophanene be assigned to the episcopacy at Martyropolis.[13]

In Armenia the Christian church had adopted many of the structures of the feudal principalities.[14] As a consequence, ecclesiastical power was initially based on family holdings in the country, not urban centres, and the granting of estates to Marutha by Theodosius may indicate that the west was honouring an Armenian noble in traditional manner. Like their pagan predecessors, the largely hereditary Armenian clergy effectively became secular lords by such benefits, yet lords beholden to the imperial metropolitan bishop of Amida.[15] Also, these rewards may have

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10 Mal., 18.5 and 18.4-6.

11 The story of Marutha's origins is preserved in the Arab authors discussed in EI (2) 928.

12 For Marutha's diplomatic activities and the success which allowed him to found Martyropolis see Soc., 7.8; the Nestorian and Syrian histories of later tradition are translated in R. Marcus (1932) 50-54; as is the late sixth-century *Life of Marutha of Maipherkat*, especially 23-31.

13 *Life of Marutha of Maipherkat*, 30-31.

14 C. Toumanoff (1963) 138-9.

15 N. Adontz (1970) 284.

facilitated the further reduction in the power of secular nobles. By the early sixth century, Christian bishops held the same status as Armenian princes. Thus it is quite possible that the episcopacy of Martyropolis came to assume duties traditionally held by client rulers.

There can be little doubt about the strategic importance of Martyropolis in frontier conflict. If Persia was to support clients in Armenia, it was essential that the lands below the Bitlis pass remain secure, with the result that the Persian Satrapy of Arzanene, east of the Nymphius, was prized by both contenders.[16] A Roman presence so close endangered Persian communication northward. In both A.D. 502 and 531 Persian forces moved to take Martyropolis. In A.D. 502 the Persian king Kavadh travelled up the Araxes valley into the Armenian highlands where he accepted the submission of Theodosiopolis. On his march south to Amida he turned against Martyropolis. The poor fortifications offered little hope for resistance and the pro-Roman satrap, Theodore, surrendered the city and two years' tribute to the Persians. He was forgiven by Anastasius, who accepted the weakened state of Martyropolis.[17] Both Anastasius and Justinian took measures to improve the defences of the city, but it was Justinian who transformed the site into a impressive military outpost.[18] In the late summer of A.D. 531 Martyropolis was again besieged.[19] This time the city put up a spirited fight, ignoring the death of its bishop, Nonnus, and the pessimism of some of the officers. By their resolve and solid defences the Martyropolitans thwarted this second assault.[20] From the mid-sixth century onwards, Martyropolis became not only a defensive point for the region, but a base for forward operations.[21] In conjunction with the

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16 L.M. Whitby (1983) 265.

17 For the A.D. 502 campaign in Sophene see Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.2.3-8; for the A.D 531 campaign see *Wars*, 1.21.4-28.

18 Mal., 399.15-17 and 427.14-7; L.M. Whitby (1985) 724.

19 For the A.D. 531 siege see Procopius, Wars, 1.21.4-16, 23-28; Zach. Mit., 9.6; and Mal., 18.66.

20 L.M. Whitby (1984) 181 criticises the account in *Wars* which emphasises the appearance of the Huns for the city's victory.

21 Zach. Mit., 9.6; L.M. Whitby (1985) 727-8. In A.D. 503, the Roman general, Celer, invaded Arzanene from Sophene, Procopius, *Wars*, 1.7.21-2; however, this invasion could not have involved the use of Martyropolis as a base for it was in the hands of the Persians.

fortified positions in the Tur 'Abdin, Roman forces in Sophanene, under the direction of the *dux Armeniae*, sought to isolate Arzanene and assault Persian holdings further east. These measures caused the region to undergo a rapid militarisation on both sides of the Nymphius, yet were largely responsible for the remarkable success of Roman forces in the region during the later sixth century.[22] In the spring of A.D. 589 the Persians captured Martyropolis, but only through treachery. The precious city was heavily garrisoned by the Persians, and the Roman commander who failed to retake it was stripped of his rank.[23] However, in A.D. 591 Khusro restored Martyropolis to the emperor Maurice in exchange for military support needed to defeat his rival, Baram.[24] The city was again seized by the Persians in A.D. 604, and was not retaken by Heraclius until A.D. 625. Fifteen years later the city was permanently lost to the Arabs.

The structural remains of the city, though now nearly vanished, confirm the importance which Martyropolis receives in the historical narratives. The late Roman walls of the city, still visible on all four sides, are laid out in a rectangular plan approximately six hundred by five hundred metres.[25] The pre-Justinianic defences were extremely vulnerable to attack due to insufficient size.[26] Justinian expanded the structure by more than twice its original dimensions with ashlar facing on both sides. Large towers punctuated the wall approximately every fifty metres, and the main circuit possessed a fore-wall which appears to have incorporated archer turrets every twenty-five metres. The entire city was surrounded by a moat. According to Christian legends, preserved in Arab geographers, Martyropolis boasted eight gates.[27] The towers are mostly rectangular, with exceptions along the east wall. Most of the construction is Arabic, although the foundation is late Roman.

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22 L.M. Whitby (1986a) 727-9; and (1983) 207-10.

23 Th. Sim., 3.5.11-16; Evag., 4.13-14.

24 Th. Sim., 4.13.24.

25 See L.M Whitby (1984) and T.A. Sinclair (1989) 289 for a description of the fortifications.

26 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.2.10-14. On the width, Whitby (1986a) 734; on height, Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.2.10.

27 *EI* (2) 829 and 931, but originally H.F Amedroz (1902), 785-812.

A basilica was constructed in the centre of the city by Marutha in the early fifth century with funds provided by Theodosius II and Yezdegerd.[28] Taylor claimed to have seen the ruins of a grand building rising above "the vile hovels that compose the modern town".[29] He compared the spacious structure to the Church of Jacob of Nisibis, remarking on its highly ornamental columns. The capitals displayed an elaborate lattice pattern of clustered grapes and foliage. The Great Church has since disappeared. Sinclair remarked that in 1983 there were several blocks from "the sixth century basilica" in the courtyard of the Ulu Cami.[30] If this stone work is of the sixth century then it is probably part of a later expansion of the Great Church.

Christian legends also mention several other ecclesiastical buildings which have not survived. Within the walls of the city itself small altars were constructed into which were placed relics of the Persian martyrs. However, the Armenian life of Marutha states that the bishop built the reliquaries into the walls of the Great Church.[31] A convent dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul was built during fifth-century expansion, as were three other churches, founded by imperial officers. Finally, within the south-east corner of Martyropolis there is a structure known as the Church of the Virgin. Little now remains to be seen, but an edifice, described by Bell as a domed church, was probably the same building constructed by Khusro II as a gesture of thanks for the aid provided by emperor Maurice.[32]

Outside of the city, in a nearby ravine, Taylor noted the remnants of the monastery of Hosea. Individual chambers were apparently cut into the sides of the gorge, allowing the ascetics to live a partially solitary life. Nearby stood the conventual church, in which was an inscription describing repairs made in A.D. 861. Taylor's gorge should presumably be in the Hazro foothills north-east of the city, along his route of travel. Twelve miles to the west lay the monastery of the prophet John, destroyed by the Persians in the late sixth century.[33]

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28 *Life of Marutha of Maipherkat*, 26 for Theodosius, 32 for Yezdegerd.
29 J.G. Taylor (1865) 24.
30 T.A. Sinclair (1989) 291.
31 *Life of Marutha of Maipherkat*, 31.
32 *EI* (2) 929.
33 Th. Sim., 1.14.7-8.

From these descriptions of Martyropolis, several general features of local defence can be distinguished. Frontier loyalties were strengthened when frontier inhabitants believed they were part of an empire which somehow could help them. The old satrapal system was fundamentally flawed: loyalties could never be strong in a system which was torn between eastern traditions and western fealty. Imperial investment in churches and the construction of a martyrium so close to the frontier began to anchor the Martyropolitans' faith, both religious and secular, in the west. However, until secure means could be provided for resisting armed aggression, incidents like Theodore's surrender were not surprising. Consolidation occured only with the administrative reforms and military construction under Justinian. Continued imperial investment in civic and ecclesiastical projects cemented these successes.

Amida lies on the west bank of the Tigris at the site of modern Diyarbakir, ninety-two kilometres north of Mardin. The site of the old city is situated on a hillock overlooking a bend in the Tigris shortly before that river turns east across the upper plains north of the Tur 'Abdin. The earliest Roman presence at Amida is difficult to pinpoint. Primitive settlement developed around the hill on which the present citadel stands, benefitting from the traffic on the Royal highway.[34] The region came increasingly within the Roman sphere of influence in the second and third centuries, but not until the peace of A.D. 298 did Sophanene become tenable as a Roman province.[35] The imperial government had envisioned the city as a well-fortified refuge for the surrounding region, which, because of the proximity of the neighbouring lands to the frontier, was the continual object of low-intensity raids by Persian brigands.[36] However, in A.D. 336 Narses, brother of king Sapor II, plundered the vicinity and briefly captured the city, revealing the need for a more impressive construction. The following year, Constantius took measures to augment the defences of Amida.[37] Walls and towers were built to

34 A.H. Manandian (1965) 24-5; see also *RBK* (1966) 133 for pre-Roman settlement.

35 A.H.M. Jones (1971) 225. It is possible that there were temporary garrisons throughout northern Mesopotamia from the middle of the second century onward; see B. Isaac (1990) 30, 399-400.

36 Amm. Marc., 18.9.1, and *The History of Jacob the Recluse*, 7.1-5.

37 For the campaign of Narses see Theoph., 20.22-26.

impressive dimensions, and artillery turrets complemented the system. Yet Amida was by no means the foremost fortress of Constantius' Mesopotamia. The city was normally garrisoned by *legio V Parthica* and a detachment of local horse;[38] this smaller force should be compared with two legions at Singara, or the three at Bezabde. Indeed, by the early fifth century, only the solitary *equites ducatores Illyricani* were stationed at Amida.[39]

As an economic and cultural base, Amida surpassed more active military centres in northern Mesopotamia. Prior to the Roman expansion, Amida's position along the Achaemenid Royal road connected the city with the wealthy economic zones of Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and Iran.[40] Combined with the fact that the Tigris bend near the city was one of the first safe launches for boats, the site was a nodal point for communications in all directions.[41] The earliest reference to Amida during the Roman period is in John Malalas, who records that the emperor Trajan made Amida a metropolis in A.D. 115, granting the city both a governor and lands previously belonging to Osrhoene.[42] Although there is no corroboration, it is likely that this emperor began to develop the settlement as a focal point for his new conquests on the upper Tigris, while he himself co-ordinated activities from Edessa.[43] However, it was not until Diocletian firmly established control in the region that Amida became one of the foremost cities within the five former Armenian satrapies of Ingilene, Sophene, Arzanene, Zabdicene, and Corduene.[44] As the principal urban centre of Sophanene, Amida would have controlled and collected the revenues from outlying territories, and organised both local recruiting for the army and the collection and redistribution of grain

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38 Amm. Marc., 18.9.3.

39 *Not. Dig., Or.* 36.18.

40 H.A. Manandian (1965) 24-25.

41 *EI* (1) 982.

42 Mal., 11.6-7.

43 F.A. Lepper (1948) 120-5, and C.S. Lightfoot (1990) 117-18. The Romans were eager to extend their municipal sytem in areas of conquest as rapidly as possible. Even if Amida were only a large village at the time, it is possible that the administration may have granted it the status of *municipium*, see F. Abbot and A. Johnson (1926) 23-4.

44 F.A. Lepper (1948) 114-5, and S. Williams (1985) 84-86.

and other goods.[45] Constantius was said to have favoured Amida as the major settlement of the upper Tigris, and under its jurisdiction he placed Arzanene and Corduene.[46] Given such powers, Amida would have controlled an excellent grain-producing region in Mesopotamia.[47] However, as a military site, Amida remained secondary, with the *dux Mesopotamiae* stationed in Nisibis.[48]

The brief notice in Ammianus given to the city's annual fair also distinguishes Amida as a principal centre of administration, cultural hegemony, and exchange with rural settlements.[49] In addition to the barter or sale of everyday commodities, annual fairs provided occasions for district elections, games, and major religious services. The magnates of the city spent a great deal of money to emphasise their regional control, and only the most significant cities could boast such celebrations. To support these occasions, Amida must have possessed superior public facilities: a large market area for stalls, playing fields, temples, public stables and other service amenities. We know from the sources that by the end of the fifth century, an amphitheatre existed within the city, as well as an open-air market, where trading continued during the Roman siege of A.D. 503/4.[50] When Anastasius learned that Amida had been recovered by the Romans he sent gifts, restored public buildings, and constructed a granary,[51] proof of the city's importance in imperial eyes. Earlier, the emperor Zeno had personally patronised an abbot of the Monastery of the Edessenes, placing considerable lands in Ingilene under the control of this Amidene convent.[52] Afterwards, a community at Constantinople, composed of Amidenes who had succeeded in the larger empire, lavished money on their hometown, as did the Patriarch of Antioch.[53]

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45 F. Abbott and A. Johnson (1926) 23-28, and 73-4 on the powers of major urban centres.

46 *The History of Jacob the Recluse*, 7.1-5.

47 J. Matthews (1989a) 52-54.

48 Amm. Marc., 19.9.6.

49 Amm. Marc., 18.8.13-14. For discussion of the role of fairs, festivals, and markets see R. MacMullen (1970).

50 *Chron. Josh.*, 66.

51 For amphitheatre and market, see *Chron. Josh.*, 75, and 66; for Anastasian development see Procopius, *Wars*, 1.7.35, and *Chron. Josh.*, 81.

52 J. Eph., *Lives*, 557-8.

53 *Chron. Josh.*, 81.

Two Armenian sources also indicate that Amida was a thriving settlement which controlled many of the neighbouring estates. Faustus Buwzand, describing contemporary Amida of the late fourth century calls the city a *k'alak'*, or 'walled-city', a specific term used by Faustus to denote major urban centres.[54] Outside the borders of Armenia, renowed Graeco-Roman cities such as Athens, Nisibis, Edessa, Caeserea, and others receive the title, while in Armenia only Artashat, Arsakawan, Tigranocerta, and Valashapat are described in such a manner. The fifth-century Armenian historian, Agathangelos, states that Amida was the residence of a great *bdeashkh*, who controlled the surrounding lands west of the Tigris.[55] The Armenian designation of *bdeashkh* describes a figure who possessed the authority similar to a Persian *marzpan;* or marcher-lord.[56] This reference might reflect the presence of the comtemporary Roman governor, commander of the *equites ducatores Illyricani,*[57] but, as the text claims to describe the late third century, Agathangelos could equally refer to a minor Roman client. In any case, the importance of the city as an economic and administrative centre is emphasised by both Faustus and Agathangelos.

Amida became an established centre of Christianity. The vicinity was said to have been associated with the prophet Jonah, and was one of the fecund areas for monasticism.[58] Furthermore, the city was intimately connected with the spread of Christianity northward. Gregory the Illuminator, who had relatives in the city, visited Amida in the early fourth century while evangelizing Armenia.[59] In the sixth century many of the local Armenian bishops, and even the bishop of Martyropolis himself, were placed under the authority of the see of Amida.[60] After Jovian surrendered Nisibis in A.D. 363, relics of the blessed bishop Jacob where brought and stored in the new extended portion of Amida, where the cult remained popular.[61] Thereafter, Christian evangelization must

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54 Faust. Buz., 3.10. See the discussion of this term in N. Garsoïan (1989) 535-40.

55 Agathangelos, 795. *Bdeashkh* is rendered *vitaxata* in Latin, as in Amm. Marc., 23.6.14.

56 For a discussion of the title *Bdeashkh* and relevant literature, see N. Garsoian (1989) 516-17.

57 *Not. Dig., Or.*, 36.18.

58 Soz., 3.14, and A. Vööbus (1960) 15-16, 231-33.

59 Agathangelos, 842.

60 N. Adontz (1970) 284.

61 Faust. Buz., 3.10; and Theod., *Hist. Relig.*, 14; see Fiey (1977) 35-36.

have accelerated in the region. Soon the upper Tigris was renowned for its many and prosperous religious establishments.[62] By the end of the fifth century, within the city limits alone, Amida could boast five monasteries, numerous private chapels and churches, not counting rural convents, hermitages, and ecclesiastical houses under the central jurisdiction of the city. A significant percentage of the Christian population was Monophysite, which caused some tension within the city and region. However, their loyalty was rarely questioned by the imperial Chalcedonian government, and as there are no incidents of treason which might shape our understanding of local defence, we shall not explore the religious dynamics of the city.[63]

The structural remains of the city have been admirably discussed by others.[64] In short, the impressive six kilometres of black basalt wall follow, and often imitate, the design of the late antique walls, although much of what is now visible is medieval repairs. An aqueduct to the north was demolished in the middle of this century. Within the city walls, there are no civil or ecclesiastical remains which date from the third to seventh centuries, apart from the chancel and apse of the sixth-century Church of the Virgin in the south-west quarter. Ornate friezes, columns, and capitols can be seen in the courtyard of the Ulu Cami, and are possibly the remains of the Church of St. Thomas built by the emperor Heraclius after the Roman recovery of the city from Persia in A.D. 628.

To understand the role that Amida played in local defence, it is best to examine the principal sieges which the city endured. In A.D. 359, the Persian king, Sapor, deterred from crossing the Euphrates by reports of flooding, turned north towards Amida, where his sudden arrival caught the Roman forces largely off-guard.[65] Amida was crowded with rustic dependents who had made their way to the city for an annual market. Six

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62 A. Vööbus (1960) 231.

63 For a discussions of the Christian communities in Amida see A. Vööbus (1960), esp. 321-37, and S.A. Harvey (1990) esp. 57-75. However, note important remarks on Monophysite loyalties in L.M. Whitby (1988) 213-15.

64 The most detailed accounts may be found in *DHGE*, 1237-49; A. Gabriel (1940) 175-82, *RBK* (1966) 133-7, and T.A. Sinclair (1989)164-95.

65 The primary source for the invasion of A.D. 359 is Amm. Marc., 18.4-19.9; for differing discussions of both Roman and Persian strategy, see J. Matthews (1989a) 50-67, and R.C. Blockley (1988).

further legions had been bivouacked within the wall, enlarging the garrison. Altogether twenty thousand individuals were confined in an area meant to support perhaps half that amount.[66] Just as the Romans had not expected that the might of Persia would be focused upon Amida, Sapor, if we are to trust Ammianus, did not expect to invest time in a protracted siege. He hoped the city would, like the nearby fortified villages of Reman and Busan, quickly capitulate before a Persian display of force.[67] It was still his intention to ford the Euphrates north of Samosata, and thence strike south into Syria.[68] Even after the initial insult of being shot at, Sapor was persuaded by military advisers that the city could be summoned to submission. The second day of defiance brought the death of the son of the Chionite king, Grumbates, an event critical in the decision to attack Amida, for to keep him loyal Sapor agreed to besiege the city.

This siege of Amida illuminates both the role such a city was expected to play in protecting the frontier, and the problems faced by local defence initiative.[69] In addition to twice refusing the summons of the Persian king, the defenders forcefully expressed their determination. With apparent pride, Ammianus recalled "the obstinacy shown by both sides" as "men watched through the night without laying aside their arms, and the hills re-echoed with the shouts which rose on either hand. Our men men extolled the prowess of Constantius Caesar, 'Lord of all things and of the world,' while the Persians hailed Sapor as Saanshah and Peroz...."[70] Motivation appears to remain high in the account of Ammianus, where the defenders resisted "with more fury than discretion". In the early stages of the siege fighting was often waged in pitched battles before the walls.[71] But within a short time Persian siege

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66 Amm. Marc., 18.8.19-9.4.

67 For the raid against the forts at Reman and Busan see Amm. Marc., 18.10.1-4; for the expected submission of Amida see 19.1.1-5.

68 This intention was a slight revison of the initial Persian strategy which aimed at rapidly passing through Mesopotamia, and crossing the river somewhere between Zeugma and Samosata, Amm. Marc., 18.5.7. , and 18.6.8-11. However, see R.C. Blockley (1988) for recent criticisms of the accuracy of Ammianus in reporting Sapor's intentions.

69 The sole source for the siege is Amm. Marc., 19.1.1-8.4.

70 Amm. Marc., 19.2.10-11.

71 Amm. Marc., 19.2.12-14.

works and early casualties seemed to have forced the Romans to fight from the ramparts. This placed the Romans in an awkward position, for many of the troops, most notably two legions freshly arrived from Gaul, were only trained in field warfare. Ammianus notes that they were useless apart from some "senseless sallies" which had as much effect as "a one-armed man sprinkling water on a conflagration."[72] In their attacks they "suffered losses equal to those they afflicted".[73] Late in the siege, when Roman captives from the fortress of Ziata were paraded before the wall, these Gallic troops almost mutinied in an attempt at glorious revenge.[74] The *Protectores* overseeing the resistance were compelled to permit a night attack on the Persian siege-works. This strike, which nearly resulted in the capture or murder of Sapor, in the end only provoked the Persians into doubling their efforts, and no further battles took place in the open.

The competent employment of artillery and engineering skill greatly benefitted the defenders. Apart from the few pitched engagements and final hand-to-hand struggle, most battle casualties were probably a result of the constant volley and counter-volley. Similarly, the advantages of ballistics were not lost on the Persians who surrounded the city with mantlets and towers armed with catapults, while slingers and archers constantly directed 'small arms fire' against the walls.[75] The Persian host had captured various pieces of Roman siege equipment at Singara, and poured missiles into the city.[76] When an underground passage was revealed to the Persians and a tower temporarily occupied by a force of archers, superior Roman artillery resecured the wall. The effective use of such engines gave the defenders a high degree of confidence.[77] The very noise of the Roman artillery was used on two occasions to shatter the nerves of the assailants. In the incident of the captured tower, the din of the engines drove crack-troops of the king to hurl themselves from the bastions, while the discharge of unloaded ballistae provided illusory

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72 Amm. Marc., 19.5.2.

73 Amm. Marc., 19.6.4.

74 For the final Gallic raid and its results see Amm. Marc., 19.6-7.1.

75 Amm. Marc., 19.5.1.

76 Amm. Marc., 19.2.8.

77 Amm. Marc., 19.5.7.

'covering-fire' for the retreating Gauls.[78] However, artillery did fail to halt the erection of two ramps which the Persians raised for storming the fortress. In response, the defenders constructed an earthwork to allow them to challenge the Persians.[79] On several occasions the Romans enacted the delicate manoeuvre of shifting entire pieces of artillery across the city to concentrate their fire.[80] In the memory of Ammianus, Roman morale remained high throughout the crisis. Even in the final struggle atop the earthen ramparts, the defenders are depicted as displaying "death-defying" and "unremitting courage."[81] On the seventy-third day of the struggle, only the unforeseeable collapse of these ramparts and the subsequent formation of a causeway from the debris allowed the Persians to flood in and butcher the inhabitants.[82]

By the late fifth century the vigilant defensive system of Amida appears to have fallen into disarray. This was not the result of a decline in wealth or military spirit; rather, with the division of Armenia in A.D. 387, hostilities between east and west subsided, and the Romans shifted their strategic resources elsewhere. Peace and prosperity had blessed the city with short-term security, and a garrison was deemed unnecessary. Thus, when Kavadh invaded in A.D. 502, the Amidenes found that they were cut off without imperial troops. Kavadh's winter attack followed a rapid plundering expedition in Armenia, and was unforeseen and unheralded.[83] It is likely that the imperial government realised too late the danger Kavadh posed to the frontier, and was powerless to respond in force. When the emperor received information of Persian troops being massed for military operations he sent an embassy to the king; if Kavadh had not yet crossed into Roman territory the ambassador was to offer him money, in return for which the Persians would draw away.[84] The strategy of Kavadh indicates that the Persians perceived the weakened state of the frontier: the campaign co-ordinated a southern attack by Arab auxiliaries

78 Amm. Marc., 19.5.6, and 19.6.10.
79 Amm. Marc., 19.6.5-6.
80 See in particular Amm. Marc., 19.5.6-7, and 19.7.6.
81 Amm. Marc., 19.8.2.
82 Amm. Marc., 19.8.2-4.
83 Procopius, *Wars*, 1.7.4.
84 *Chron. Josh.*, 50.

while the main Persian host moved quickly through Armenia and Sophanene before striking south at Amida.[85] Given the confidence of Kavadh, it is not surprising that the Roman ambassador, Rufinus, was taken hostage.

The Amidenes' faith in the apparent security of a prosperous peace may be seen in noteworthy extra-mural establishments. According to John of Ephesus, the monastery of Mar Samuel was constructed around the pillar of the founder on the outside of the city wall.[86] Similarly, outside the north wall rose the monastery of Mar John, a convent of some four hundred monks, and during the siege of A.D. 502, these ascetics were forced to seek refuge in a school within Amida. These constructions entail confidence on the part of the Amidenes that their immediate region would suffer from no significant brigandage, although the city gates were still barred at night. An unstable countryside did not push monastic institutions nearer to urban establishments. Individuals such as Jacob the Recluse suggest that rural ascetics were still present in the country and could successfully cope with both daily and extraordinary tribulations. Jacob, not the city-bound monasteries, created a refugee centre in a time of crisis.[87] The peacetime construction of monasteries on the exterior of the city defences indicates that the Amidenes perceived no serious military threat to their section of the frontier. It is not the case that increased dangers led monks to seek protection near the walls of the city, nor that the Ephthalite Huns so terrified the countryside as to purge it of inhabitants.[88] The upper Tigris supported numerous rural monasteries, the largest being in villages some distance from the city.[89] Furthermore, the Ephthalite Huns dwelt far from Sophanene, and were normally allies of the imperial forces, only damaging Roman territories when recruited into the Persian army.[90] In spite of the presence of such maurauders, the

85 *Chron. Josh.*, 50-51.

86 J. Eph., *Lives*, 562-3.

87 Procopius, *Wars*, 1.7.5-11.

88 This is the impression left by S.A. Harvey (1990) 57-75.

89 A. Vööbus (1960) 231-7.

90 Procopius, *Wars*, 1.3.4.; see also the discussion in A. Vasilev (1950) 315-17. In the two cases Harvey sights the Huns do no harm whatsoever to ascetics apart from a good fright, 66-5; more problems seemed to be caused by the monks' frenzied visions and public harangues.

civic authorities were not so alarmed as to take emergency measures. In the tale of the odd monastic practices of Theophilus and Maria, John of Ephesus recounts how he stalked the two through the city and on top of the east wall, where he discovered that the siblings nightly performed their unique acts of worship, falling on the faces and then arising *orans*. Never once did either John or the couple encounter a sentry, although Maria indicated that their ritual must always end by dawn lest they be spotted by townsfolk.[91] Clearly, there would appear to be no night watch, at least along the perimeter of the city wall.

Yet the defences were of sufficient strength to convince the citizens that resistance was a viable option in A.D. 502, and we should not belittle the impressive condition of the circuit wall itself which foiled Kavadh's employment of rams.[92] John Malalas described Amida in the time of Anastasius as "an extremely strong metropolis", though his opinion may have been shaded by the restorations of Justinian.[93] Furthermore, when high-ranking hostages were returned to the Romans, the *magister militum* was furious with the governor of Amida for what he perceived as a betrayal of a city which the Persians themselves admitted was impregnable. The death sentence was recommended.[94] Even after the city had fallen, worn down by an eighty-day assault, the Roman force sent to reclaim Amida chose not to storm the still formidable walls.[95] Clearly, both citizen and government thought Amida a match for the Persian attack. Perhaps the citizens were encouraged that the winter season was in their favour. Whatever the case, the Amidenes immediately exhibited an unyielding nature by choosing to resist.

Throughout the assault, the besieged displayed determined ingenuity in thwarting their assailants.[96] Battering rams were shattered by timbers hurled from the parapets; an artificial mound was undermined; an engine christened "the crusher" was built to hurl three-hundred pound

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91 J. Eph., *HE.*, 514-17.

92 Procopius, *Wars*, 1.7.13.

93 Mal., 16.9.

94 *Chron. Josh.*, 80.

95 Procopius, *Wars*, 1.8.7.

96 The two primary accounts of the siege are Procopius, *Wars*, 1.7.4-32, and *Chron. Josh.*, 50-53.

stones into the Persian mantlets and penthouses; and many smaller ballistic devices were brought into effect. It could be said that Amida fell, not from any lack of resolve, but rather due to overconfidence. For when the king began to raise the siege, the citizens took to the ramparts and jeered at their opponents, and courtesans displayed themselves lewdly. This latter event the Magi interpreted as an omen that an entrance to Amida would soon be revealed. The siege was renewed. However, the level of confidence remained high within the city, too high according to contemporary observers attempting to rationalise the disgrace. Joshua the Stylite states quite clearly, "the Amidenes became overconfident in their victory, and fell into careless ways, and did not guard the wall with the same diligence as before." The sector of the wall against which the monastery of Mar Samuel had been constructed was guarded by the monks of that place. The Persian army had leveled the monastery while constructing their great mound.[97] It is not clear whether this material was carted-off to another section of the wall, or whether the mound incorporated the convent itself. Either case would indicate intense fighting around the sector charged to the monks. However, the monks felt sufficiently at ease to celebrate a religious feast on the tenth of January, A.D. 503. A small, poorly blocked, underground passage led through the wall into the monks' tower. Combining this entry and scaling ladders, the Persians seized the tower and slaughtered its groggy wardens. Still, the Amidenes held their ground. An alarm was raised and the captured section isolated. Had it not been for the personal appearance and invectives of the Persian king, the threat may have been overthrown. After holding out for eighty days, Amida fell, its gates still sealed and walls intact.

The A.D. 359 and 502/3 sieges pose a problem for our understanding of local defence. In both cases, confidence in the defenders' own abilities and in the condition of the battlements was extremely high. In neither case did the Amidenes attempt to buy their freedom either through bribes or symbolic fealty, although both Sapor and Kavadh seemed to have expected this reaction. In both cases Amida delayed the Persian host to the detriment of a planned wider invasion of Roman territory. Why then did

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97 J. Eph., *Lives*, 563.

Amida twice fall, when other cities with less determination withstood assault, and how much do these capitulations detract from a successful defensive policy?

Amida was intended to act as a focal point for co-ordinating campaigns and a haven in times of crisis. The role envisioned for Amida by the Romans was one of localised defence, a formidable stronghold, but a refuge nonetheless.[98] This role continued into the late fourth century as both Jovian and Valens increased the size of the city and its defences. Initially, this increase seems to have been in response to the influx of civilians transplanted from Nisibis. These refugees were established in a village west of the old city, and a wall was raised to join the two settlements.[99] With Nisibis in Persian hands, the emperor Valens realised the greater importance Amida might have as a regional shelter and base.[100] It was during his reign that the line of defences, upon which the present walls now stand, was designed, as an inscription above the Harput gate attests.[101] However the cavalry garrison found in the *Notitia Dignitatum* indicates both a decrease in the number of troops stationed in Amida since Ammianus' day, and also a change in the function of the site. By the turn of the fifth century, the imperial authorities viewed Amida and Constantina as centres from which to launch attacks against the Arabs, hence the necessity of constructing Dara when renewed hostilities required a base for operating against the Persians.[102] During the reign of Justinian, Amida appears to have acted as headquarters for some low-intensity campaigns against Persian bandits, but little more.[103] Procopius is brief in his descriptions of Justinianic improvements to the city.[104] Both the main circuit wall and the forewall were repaired, or replaced with new structures. Undoubtedly, the old fourth-century works needed refurbishment. But given the stalwart resistance in the siege of A.D. 502/3, and the hesitancy of the Romans to storm Amida in the following year, it

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98 Amm. Marc., 18.9.1.

99 Zos., 3.34, and *CP*, p. 552; see map in *RBK* 135 for western expansion.

100 J. Matthews (1989a) 66.

101 Transcription of inscription is found in J. Matthews (1989a) 489.

102 *Chron. Josh.*, 90.

103 Mal., 18.65.

104 Procopius, *Buildings*, 2.3.27-8.

is likely that Procopius exaggerates the poor condition of the walls. Nonetheless, improvements were made both to Amida and subordinate forts, and the emperor sent the patrician Plato to oversee the proper management of the defences.[105] Procopius reveals little about these nearby forts, save that they had been made of mud bricks. Only two are named: Apandas and the fortified village of Virthon; apparently there were others.[106] Such stockades were part of a local defence system in conjunction with Amida, but how they functioned is not clear. Major military strongholds lay further north and east. The *duces Armeniae* had their seats in Citharizon, Artaleson and Martyropolis, while the *magister militum per Armeniam* was based at Theodosiopolis. In the spring of A.D. 586, the Roman general, Philippicus, chose to meet Persian envoys in Amida to negotiate a treaty.[107] It seems reasonable to surmise that the defences of Amida were thought formidable enough to intimidate the embassy. A few months later, when the campaign to seize the Persian fortress of Chlomaron failed, it was to Amida that Philippicus retreated.[108] Thus, Amida appears never to have been classified as the premier bulwark of the east.

Examining these sieges, one can identify four problems which beset Amida. Although they are all significant, none of them ultimately undermined the effectiveness of local defence. First, in both sieges, Amida was surprised by the arrival of the Persian host. Poor surveillance and communication prevented the Romans from anticipating Persian aims. This seems to be a typical limitation of Roman army intelligence.[109] Second, the city also suffered the inevitable mixed loyalties of a frontier settlement. In the A.D. 359 siege the city almost fell when a Persian sympathizer revealed the secret stairwell into a tower.[110] In the sixth century local merchants had few difficulties selling goods and provender

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105 Mal., 18.26; 18.76, briefly mentions that the fortifications of Amida received some refurbishment.

106 Procopius, *Buildings*, 2.4.19-21.

107 Th. Sim., 1.15.1-13.

108 Th. Sim., 2.9.16.

109 B. Isaac (1990) 401-8, gives the impression that military surveliance was weak along the entire length of the eastern frontier. However, note obsevations below in Chp. 5 § 6.

110 Amm. Marc. 19.5.5.

to the Persian garrison during the Roman campaign to recapture Amida.[111] Stories of the abuses of Roman soldiers against the inhabitants were accepted with little question.[112] By and large, however, disaffection was not a critical factor in the history of Amida. Third, either through the confinements of space, poor supply system, or the inevitable filth of battle, Amida suffered from a lack of sanitation during these crises. The epidemic narrated by Ammianus reminds the modern reader of the difficulties placed before late antique defenders in an environment which only fostered infection and disease.[113] Similar problems beset the Persian garrison in the sixth century. Even though they had stocked the city storerooms, and originally were able to continue trade with the locals, starvation eventually gripped the city and some resorted to cannibalism.[114] Clearly, the management of supplies and the maintenance of discipline amongst the civilian population were essential to successful resistance. Finally, in the fourth century the co-ordination of defences often relied on the talents of specialists and an elite corps to oversee operations. Even regulars in the imperial field army do not seem to have been trained specifically for enduring long sieges.[115] The Gallic legions typify the late Roman soldier, who may be a fierce and even disciplined opponent in a pitched engagement, but lacks the capacity to undertake engineering duties useful in a siege. The impression left by Ammianus' account is that only a small part of the Roman force knew how to co-ordinate artillery and design counter-measures against the Persians assault.[116] In the end, Sapor took care to hunt down and crucify the Roman officers who masterminded the resistance.[117] Therefore, one may conclude that only a small number of specialists would be necessary to supervise the running of siege engines and counter-works. As long as an arsenal was kept, the empire could free itself of the need for large troops in frontier cities,

111 Procopius, *Wars*, 1.9.5, and *Chron. Josh.* 66.

112 Procopius, *Wars*, 1.9.7.

113 Amm. Marc., 19.4.1-8. W.E. Kaegi (1991) discusses some of the problems the environment created for combatants.

114 *Chron. Josh.*, 76-77

115 For a discussion of the widening gap of talent between officers such as Ammianus and the rank and file soldiers see de Jonge (1982) 84-5.

116 J. Matthews (1989a) 64-5.

117 Amm. Marc., 19.9.2.

provided that citizen morale remained high. Indeed, by the sixth century, a large garrison is not present in the city, which may indicate a shift in imperial policy away from the highly militarised frontier of Constantius, to a more economic use of force. In sum, it would appear that it was not the duty of Amida to act as a permanent shield for the wealthy lands to the west, but to hamper and delay a Persian advance until a Roman field army could arrive and fight the Persians in a pitched battle. From one perspective, the success of the system in holding large armies for up to three months may have led imperial forces to a slower responses; or, from another, may have allowed them to free troops for important operations in other areas. In the end, the policy pursued by Anastasius and Justinian of multiplying the number and extent of fortifications succeeded in exhausting Persian war efforts.

§ 3. The Middle Euphrates: Citharizon, Artaleson, and Melitene:

Prior to the late fifth century the defence of the frontier sector along the Arsanias river was devolved to the local Armenian satraps, who mustered their own forces and provided a link between Roman installations in the west along the Euphrates, and in the south throughout Mesopotamia.[118] Like many of the satrapies which lent support to the rebels Illus and Leontinus, their hereditary rights were stripped away by Zeno; the exception was the satraps of Balabitine who retained full powers until Justinian's reforms. The most powerful family in this region was the Kaminakan House, a branch of the former Arsacid dynasts of Armenia, which ruled from the territory of Hasteank, or Asthianene as it was know to the Romans, and continued to have great influence until the seventh century.[119] Asthianene preserved its independence until Justinianic legislation incorporated the region into *Armenia IV*, the satrapal system not having proved satisfactory for growing frontier pressures.[120] At the same time, the emperor replaced the satraps in

118 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.1.24-29; J.D. Howard-Johnston (1989) 213.
119 N. Garsoïan (1989) 382 and C. Toumanoff (1963) 172, 192, and 193 for the sources and history of the Kaminakani.
120 *CJ*, 1.29.5; *Nov.*, 31.

Asthianene and Chorzane with *duces* whom he established, with fortifications and regular garrisons, at Citharizon and Artaleson.[121]

The location of two ducal seats of the region can be identified. Citharizon lies approximately forty kilometres north-east of Bingöl in the foothills, overlooking the Arsanias river.[122] The remains of the fortress rest atop a horn-shaped hillock which blends into the surrounding terrain. Numerous important routes may be monitored from this position. North-eastern movement from Erzurum must descend through the Çobantas pass along the Göynuk river valley, while traffic from Van and central Armenia emerges from the Buglan pass to the east. Both routes, now followed by modern roads, meet west of Citharizon and follow the Arsanias to Melitene and the west. Finally, movement over the Taurus pass either rises from or descends onto the Bingöl plain, also observable from Citharizon. The precise location for Artaleson is still debated, although I support Sinclair's suggestion of Kigi, a site which has the remains of a citadel and an Armenian settlement, but which sits along a more circuitous route to Erzurum.[123] Howard-Johnston was unable to find suitable remains in the countryside between Cat and Karliova, and it is less likely to have been in this area. The satrapy of Chorzane, in the middle of which stood Artaleson, centred around the Peri Suyu valley.[124] If Artaleson is placed anywhere along the waters of the Peri Suyu between Kigi and Viransehir, it would have straddled a main highway halfway between Erzurum and Citharizon, having access to minor east-west routes. From this location one could track a force which sought to circumvent the Seytan Daglari range and outflank Citharizon.

Asthianene and the western territory of Balabitine were probably not ceded to Rome with other satrapies of the Syrian March under the Peace of A.D. 298, but were added in the later fourth century.[125] Christian influence in the area of Asthianene took an early root and had a long

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121 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.1.28-9.

122 J.D. Howard-Johnston (1989) 203-11 for the topography and brief history of Citharizon.

123 T.A. Sinclair (1989) 142-43.

124 N. Adontz (1970) 15-6.

125 Territories gained under the Peace of Nisibis are mentioned in Peter the Patrician, *Leg. ad gen.*, 3; later additions are discussed in E. Stein (1949) 298, and C. Toumanoff (1963) 131, 171-2.

history. One of the first mentions of Asthianene refers to King Trdat supporting Gregory the Illuminator's sending of a bishop into the area, and one of the last is the mention of bishop Marianos of Citharizon at the Council in Trullo of A.D. 692.[126] In the valley below the northern escarpment of Citharizon are remains of a well-constructed cruciform church similar to that at Satala.[127] Perhaps the civilian settlement expanded around the stream below the fortress.

Roman defences north of the Taurus may have been developed during Anastasius' reign, but their existence does not become apparent until the second quarter of the sixth century.[128] Shortly after his arrival in the winter of A.D. 531/2, the *dux* of Citharizon led the garrison in its first engagement. A large band of Sabir Huns, retreating after autumn raids, moved from the south-east toward the Taurus passes where they were challenged and repulsed on the upper Tigris plain by the *dux* of Martyropolis. Withdrawing across the Taurus mountains, the Huns sacrificed a significant force in assaulting Citharizon, so that a second body could escape.[129]

On several occasions Citharizon acted as an assembly point for Roman manoeuvres beyond the frontier. It is possible that the city saw the gathering of imperial arms for the ill-fated campaign of A.D. 528-9.[130] When the Romans invaded Persarmenia in A.D. 543, Martin, *magister militum*, and two of his subordinate generals drew their forces around the city.[131] And in the winter of A.D. 577/8, Maurice, *magister militum per Orientem et comes foederatorum*, encamped and trained his forces around Citharizon, positioned so as to react quickly to Persian advances against either Armenia or Mesopotamia.[132] It was not until Maurice was drawn away from this position by the offensive of Mahbodh, that Tamkhusro was able to pass Citharizon, cross the Taurus mountains, and

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126 Sources for Gregory are examined in N. Garsoïan (1989) 468; the sources for Marianos are given in N. Adontz (1970) 474 n. 69.

127 This basilica was visited by C.S. Lightfoot and myself in June 1991.

128 J.D. Howard-Johnston (1989) 215-20 for the probability of pre-Justinianic construction.

129 Zach. Mit., 9.6.

130 As is argued in J.D. Howard-Johnston (1989) 220.

131 Procopius, *Wars*, 2.24.13.

132 J. Eph., *HE*, 6.14. L.M. Whitby (1988) 268-9 discusses the role of Citharizon during this campaign.

raid the territories surrounding Amida.[133] Finally, the capture of Citharizon was a primary objective in the Persian offensive of A.D. 607, but after this capitulation the city was probably returned under the Peace of A.D. 629.[134]

Artaleson was created in the early sixth century to tighten Roman control in the region of Xorjayn, known later to the Romans as Chorzane, which was traversed by the Roman road from Citharizon to Theodosiopolis.[135] Chorzane is not mentioned in either Classical or Armenian sources prior to the late fifth century.[136] The inhabitants of the region, distinguished as subjects of the two great empires but not divided by geographical features, were united in other respects. They did not construct strongholds or willingly raid each other's land; families were linked through intermarriage, market towns shared, and large settlements were adjacent.[137] This posed enormous problems for Romans. Without delineating Roman from non-Roman, the imperial government could never depend on the loyalty of the area, nor could this section of the frontier serve to defend other Roman territories from attack, as was made evident in Kavadh's A.D. 502 campaign.

In response to these difficulties, the imperial government constructed the fortress-city of Artaleson. A centrally located Armenian town was surrounded with a strong wall and given a permanent garrison, under the command of a *dux*.[138] The ancient Armenian satrapal seat of Chorzane was located at the fortress of Koloberd, identified with the site of modern Kigi; this city was undoubtedly the town chosen by the imperial government to administer the area.[139] Presumably, Artaleson's augmented importance as the urban centre of Chorzane allowed the

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133 Th. Sim., 3.15.13-15; Men. Prot., 23.6; J. Eph., *HE.*, 6.14.

134 On the capture of Citharizon see Sebeos 23, and Stephen of Taron 61. The terms of the Peace of A.D. 629 discussed in the *724 Chronicle*, 108,114, state the surrounding territory remained in Persian hands. But given the instability in Persia it is likely that the region returned to Roman jurisdiction.

135 For Chorzane see N. Adontz (1970) 14-16, 19-20, 39, 43, 182, 307.

136 C. Toumanoff (1963) 457-8 and 442.

137 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.3.9-14 is our fullest discussion of Chorzane and its inhabitants, which is described and discussed in N. Adontz (1970) 14-17.

138 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.3.13-14.

139 See N. Adontz (1970) 379-8 n.26 for the identification of Koloberd.

Romans to control economic and cultural transactions, as well as religious festivals, and to decrease the overlap between Roman and Persian spheres of influence.[140]

Brief mention should be made of the smaller sites which supported Citharizon and Artaleson, or acted in conjunction with them. First, to the west of both Citharizon and Artaleson, guarding major fords of the Arsanias tributaries, stood lesser fortified sites.[141] Second, those travelling from Persarmenia to Roman Mesopotamia, had first to slip past Citharizon to the Arsanias crossing near Genç. On the north bank atop a high bluff overlooking the river are the remains of a fortified post.[142] After fording the river one rapidly ascended the Illyrisis, the western of the two Taurus passes. A eastern route through the Saphcae pass crossed the Taurus from Muç via the Kulp Çay valley, emerging north of Martyropolis.[143] During the early sixth century the Romans garrisoned both passes and placed a large fort at Pheison, for observing the Illyrisis entrance to the mountains and the upper Tigris plain from higher ground.[144]

Two features of the sites in Asthianene and Chorzanene display the highly localised nature of Roman defences. First, fortifications and settlements were situated to command specific areas: passes were bottled and river fords monitored. Second, as assembly points, the sites were usually directed against the interests of a specific area. In the consolidation of frontier lands, the Romans increased their hold over settlements by carefully delineating Roman and non-Roman through the changes in laws, marriage customs, separation of communities, and control of religious, cultural, and economic centres.

Melitene stands on the west side of the Euphrates, approximately ten kilometres north of modern Malatya.[145] To the east of the city flows

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140 Such activities were assumed by cities hosting markets in a region, R. MacMullen (1970).

141 See J.D. Howard-Johnston (1989) 221-23 for a discussion of these fortifications.

142 T.A. Sinclair (1989) 132.

143 L.M. Whitby (1985) 201.

144 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.3.1-6; Taylor (1865) 39 noted the massive ruins of well-cut stone spread out on the slopes; see also Dakyanus Kale in T.A. Sinclair (1989) 272-3.

145 For a concise account of the remains, topography and history of the site see A. Gabriel (1940) 263-8; T.B. Mitford (1980) 1186; J. Crow (1989) 93-102; T.A. Sinclair (1989) 8-10; *EI* (2) 230-1.

one of the Euphrates tributaries. The site commands access to an important ford over the Euphrates near Tomisa where the Achaemenid Royal road meets the north-south highway leading eventually to Trapezus.[146] Control of this sector had been granted to Cappadocian kings during the Republic. An older Cappadocian fortress preceded the Roman establishment in the general vicinity, but little is know apart from its name, Shamiran.[147] Until the reign of Tiberius, the Euphrates crossing near Melitene had been under the guardianship of client auxiliaries.[148] Permanent occupation waited until A.D. 70, when *legio XII Fulminata* shifted north to Melitene after Jerusalem was secured, and remained there throughout the unit's history.[149] Over the next few decades the civil population increased. The emperor Trajan, who had used the site as a base for his Armenian campaign of A.D. 114, elevated the settlement to the rank of city and Melitene became metropolis of Cappadocia.[150] A number of auxiliary forts were established in the second and third centuries along the Euphrates to mark Roman control and to facilitate defence and communication.[151]

During Sapor's A.D. 359 invasion, Melitene became the headquarters for Ursicinus' beleaguered command.[152] However, this was a temporary arrangement. The forward line of defences radiated around the Mesopotamian cities under the jurisdiction of the *dux Mesopotamiae*, while the defence of the Euphrates was co-ordinated from the southern cities of Samosata, Zeugma, or in the A.D. 359 assault, Edessa.[153] The original walls of the city were unable to contain the civil expansion of Melitene. Outside the fortifications temples, legal courts, theatres, baths

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146 B. Isaac (1990) 11; H.A. Manandian (1965) 24-5.

147 Pliny, *Nat. hist.*, 6.8.

148 Tac., *Annals*, 12.49; T.B. Mitford (1980)1173-4.

149 Joseph., *Bell. Jud.*, 7.1.3; *Not. Dig, Or.* 38.14.

150 Joseph., *Bell. Jud.*, 7.1.3; Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.4.15-17; A.H.M. Jones (1971) 179; D. Magie (1950) 1436, 1464; B. Isaac (1990) 139, 281-2.

151 These sites are discussed in T.B. Mitford (1980) 1187-92.

152 Amm. Marc., 19.8.12; R.C. Blockley (1988) 254.

153 Sabinianus, as *magister equitum per Orientem* kept the majority of his force centred in this district, Amm. Marc., 18.7; R.C. Blockley (1988) 254-55; Ursicinus, as *dux Mesopotamiae* normally co-ordinated operations from Nisibis, Amm. Marc., 19.9.6; J. Matthews (1989a) 41, and 52.

and stoas all appeared as the city's cultural and economic power increased. The market of Melitene was large enough to attract agents for Persian trade.[154] By the late fifth century the majority of the settlement was unprotected. Like many cities after the incursions of A.D. 515, Anastasius provided Melitene with a circuit wall; the work was left incomplete, however, until after his death.[155] The massive ruined ramparts of Melitene date from this period.[156] The city did not have a forewall, although a moat encircles the site. Square, circular, and prow-face towers are present along the irregularly shaped perimeter. Little civil or ecclesiastical architecture has survived.

The remainder of Melitene's history in late antiquity may be summarized briefly. When, in A.D. 503 a detachment of Kavadh's army was assaulting the territory of Constantina, Eugenius, *dux* of Melitene joined forces with Olympius, *dux* of Constantina, an apparently senior officer.[157] Initially, the Romans succeeded in limiting Persian manoeuvres, but during a night battle received heavy casualties. However, Eugenius' force was sufficient to march north and defeat the Persian garrison at Theodosiopolis.[158] In January A.D. 503 the Roman general Patricius embarked from Melitene on his campaign to recapture Amida. The city had been his winter headquarters and Patricius may have supplied his force with goods and civilian expertise from there.[159] Through the sixth century Melitene remained an attractive and powerful city, whose interests were served by imperial patrons. Domitian, a relative of the emperor Maurice and one of the most active frontier bishops, was granted the see of Melitene, which in the late sixth century had a

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154 J. Eph., *Lives*, 31; Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.4.18.

155 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.4.19-20; Mal., 16.17; C. Capizzi (1969) 207; B. Croke and J. Crow (1983) 146 have argued that Justinian's contribution has been inflated; however, see reply in L.M. Whitby (1987) 101.

156 T.B. Mitford (1980) 1186; however see J. Crow (1986) 84-6 for a medieval dating of the walls.

157 *Chron. Josh.*, 41. Olympias gives the orders to assemble the army after their victory.

158 *Chron. Josh.*, 42. Possibly, Eugenius had withdrawn his troops prior to the night battle.

159 *Chron. Josh.*, 66; and 87: Patricius returns to the city when Kavadh quit his campaign.

celebrated church,[160] and Maurice himself was born at Arabissus, in Cappadocia, to the east of Melitene.[161] One final incident of importance is known about the region before the Arab invasions. After a severe defeat during his A.D. 576 Armenian campaign, Khusro moved to the Euphrates crossing near Melitene. The city was caught without a garrison. Before the approaching imperial army could confront them, the Persians stormed the city and burned many of its finer buildings, before retreating into Arzanene.[162]

Like sites to the east, Melitene controlled a specific area: the Euphrates crossings opposite Tomisa. But because of its central location along major highways, the city was also a perpetual focus of campaign assembly, co-ordination, and retreat. In particular, Melitene draws attention to the ability of an intially military community to provide the catalyst for provincial development. Native life revolved around Melitene as the metropolis of the region. As a metropolitan centre, the city perpetually enjoyed the lavish rewards of imperial patronage.

§ 4. The Armenian highlands and the Upper Euphrates: Theodosiopolis and Satala:

Theodosiopolis, modern Erzurum, lies two hundred and fifty kilometres south of the Black Sea port of Batumi.[163] Situated on a plateau near the head-waters of the upper Euphrates (Kara Su), the city lies on the main highway between Asia Minor, Transcaucasia, and Iran. Major routes radiate north-west to Kars and the upper Aras river valley, or south-east through the Delibaba gorge to Mt. Ararat, and then strike south for Persia, while the Pontic Alps are crossed by tracks north to Hopa and Batumi, or north-west toward Trapezus.

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160 Th. Sim., 4.14.5; 5.3.1; 8.11.10-11. Maurice had secured the see for his ambitious young relative shortly after being appointed *mag. mil. per. Or.* in A.D. 577/8, L.M. Whitby (1988) 14.

161 L.M. Whitby (1988) 5.

162 Th. Sim., 3.14.11; L.M. Whitby (1988) 262-6 for a discussion of this episode.

163 For a concise history of Theodosiopolis (Erzurum) and Karin see *DHGE* 831-36, *EI* (1) 31, and *EI* (2) 712.

The site has a long history as the urban centre of the region known as Karentis or Karin, an area comprising the Euphrates plain below the Pontic Alps. Wrested from the mountain chieftains by the Armenians, by the first century A.D. Karin soon developed a commercial and administrative focus. Simply dubbed 'Karnoy', or the city of Karin, the settlement was probably the capital of one of the one-hundred and twenty satrapies established by Trdat the Great.[164] When Armenia was divided in A.D. 387, and Pap's eldest son, Arshak II, was set up as Roman client king in Karnoy, the city had expanded its economic position and possessed walls.[165] Karin had formed one of the principal domains of the Arsacid dynasty even before this partition occured. Manuel Mamikonean challenged the Arsacid prince Varazdates on the fields of Karin, and later during the regency of the young Arshak, Manuel based Arsacid power in Karnoy.[166] Sometime after both the death of Arshak in A.D. 390 and the compilation of the *Notitia Dignitatum,* the imperial government placed the princes of *Armenia minor* under a *comes Armeniae,* but granted them immunity from taxes and a high degree of political mobility, so long as it accorded with Roman policy.[167] The *comes Armeniae* was, from the Armenian vantage point, little different from the Iranian office of *marzpan*. Unlike other Roman *comites,* he commanded no troops, but was the senior civil official of the area, and like the old imperial *vicari,* his function was to supervise the economy, handle important legal matters, and oversee the governors. This Roman viceroy established his command at Karnoy, renamed Theodosiopolis.

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164 Strabo 11.14.5.; Pliny, *Nat. hist.*, 5.20.87, where Karnoy is referred to as a *praefectura;* C. Toumanoff (1963) 79, 11-2, 156-7, and 331-2; H.A. Manandian (1965) 87-88; N. Adontz (1970) 43-44.

165 Faust. Buz., 6.1; MX 3.42; and LP 1.6-8, where Karinkoy is refered to as *K'alak,* or walled city; Garsoïan (1989) 387, 535.

166 Faust. Buz., 5.37, and 54; C. Toumanoff (1963) 193-4 n. 209; N. Adontz (1970) 98-9.

167 Procopius, *Wars,* 2.3.35; MX 3.46; C. Toumanoff (1963) 152, 133, 193; N. Adontz (1970) 93-4; E. Stein (1949) 528 n. 89. However, A.H.M. Jones (1964) 229 holds that the *comes Armeniae* was not appointed until the reign of Zeno.

The are some discrepancies amongst the sources over the foundation of Theodosiopolis.[168] However, it is possible to establish several stages of development and identify the main military, civil, and ecclesiastical features. Arsacid Karnoy, with its simple enclosure, had been the base of Roman authority in the region since partition in A.D. 387. In the mid-fifth century, Theodosiopolis received improved defences when Anatolius, *magister militum per Orientem* under Theodosius II, was ordered to further entrench Roman power in Karin, perhaps in reaction to minor incursions in A.D. 441.[169] Anatolius was well-suited for the undertaking; his concern for the eastern frontiers inspired him to instigate reforms aimed at improving the discipline and effectiveness of the *limitanei*.[170] But in spite of Moses' claim to be reporting the features of Anatolius' construction, his history more accurately describes the work of Anastasius and Justinian, prior to which only a Roman citadel and the older Armenian enclosure defended the position.[171] Under Anastasius a circuit wall thirty feet in height was raised to surround the growing civilian settlement. However, this wall proved insufficient against determined assailants, as the A.D. 502 campaign of Kavadh proved. The third and fullest stage of construction was completed during the reign of Justinian, and it is to this period that we may attribute most of the impressive qualities of Theodosiopolis hailed in the sources.

Part of the citadel hill towered above the circuit wall jeopardizing the south-east sector of the defences. The elevated rock was carved away and a channel formed between the citadel wall and the slope of the citadel hill. This channel was joined with a moat which encircled the entire city. Behind this moat was constructed a forewall and behind this a two-storyed

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168 See N. Adontz (1970) 119-25 for a discussion of Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.5.1-12 , MX, 3.59, and the *Disputation of the Holy Armenian Vardapets Moses and David with the Diophysites*, trans. in N. Adontz (1970) 149.

169 Z. Rubin (1986) 36-39.

170 See discussion and sources in A.H.M. Jones (1964) 203, 353, 1109 n. 71, and 1146 n. 68.

171 N. Adontz (1970) 122, and R.W. Thomson (1978) 7-8; Procopius states clearly that the Anastasian walls enclosed the hill which the Theodosian fort dominated, *Buildings*, 3.5.1-4.

curtain.[172] Careful measures were taken to prevent an enemy force from undermining these walls. New foundations of undressed stone were buried deep below the soil, and the curious steps referred to in the 'legend' may have been angled stonework designed to deflect a direct blow from picks and rams.[173] Both prow-shaped and circular towers, and broad gates featured in the defences, were made with crenellations and narrow embrasures to maximize the safety of the archers. The entire fortress was dressed in fine stone, presumably ashlar. A series of underground channels are mentioned, but only by the Armenian sources. Some of these conduits constantly supplied fresh water to the city. One emerged by a marsh, from which fuel and animal fodder could be gathered. On the mountain side of the city, an even larger tunnel was constructed to allow the movement of cavalry, but this may simply be a garbled reference to a sally port.[174] Many store-houses and an armoury were placed in the citadel.

The city itself was known for its systematic organisation, and its position on the central trade routes encouraged a high standard of living and urban development.[175] Streets and colonnades were set out in an orderly fashion, and the markets and slaughterhouses were impeccable. Theodosiopolis's ecclesiastical architecture was celebrated in local tradition. A number of religious establishments were known to have existed in the vicinity of Theodosiopolis by the sixth century. Two in particular enjoyed imperial patronage. Within the city itself, Justinian dedicated a church to the Mother of God, and nearby, refurbished the monastery of the Forty Martyrs.[176]

Furthermore, a series of important points along the routes to and from Theodosiopolis were fortified or redeveloped by the imperial government in the first half of the sixth century.[177] Justinian provided

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172 N. Adontz (1970) 122-3 gives the height of the wall as between twenty-four and thirty feet high and six feet thick. However, the Justinianic walls must have been higher, for the inferior wall of Anastasius was only thirty feet high.

173 "...two hundred steps, one below the other, were set on the outside wall for safety from tunnels by the enemy."

174 This incredible feature is only mentioned in the legend.

175 H.A. Manandian (1965) 90.

176 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.4.12-14.

177 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.4.6-10.

grants or perhaps tax relief to encourage the repair of old hill-forts or the building of new ones.[178] In addition, military installations were developed at Baiberdon (Bayburt) and Areon; while Lysiormum and Lytarizon were reinforced, and a new fort was established at a site known as Germani Fossatum.[179] The town of Bizana (Erzincan) was situated on the open plain of the upper Euphrates, exposed to cavalry raids and near malarial marshes. Justinian chose not to invest resources in the site, but placed a new fortified settlement in foothills to the west at Tzumina. Nine kilometres west of Erzincan, at Altintepe, is a great mount crowned by the remains of an Urartian citadel. Surrounding the older defences are enormous ashlar walls, and this seems to be the likeliest position for Tzumina.[180] However, for the civilian community, which remained largely at Bizani, Justinian built a monastery dedicated to St. George; and at Coucarizon and Petrios he restored older convents.[181]

As a royal domain, the area around Karin had been exposed to Christian evangelization in the early fourth century. A certain John was dispatched by Gregory the Illuminator to educate the princely families and their rural dependents.[182] Ordained at Caeserea, Gregory and by extension John and successive bishops of Theodosiopolis, had an affinity towards the imperial church and a westward outlook, which was reinforced by the partition of A.D. 387.[183] In the late fourth century, Archbishop Nerses returned from his own consecration at Caeserea and instructed Khad, a deacon of Karin, to establish hospices based on the Roman model throughout the land.[184] This western disposition was nurtured by the

178 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.4.8-9.

179 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.4.10; N. Adontz (1970) 49-51,113, and 118 locates these forts in the vicinity of Bayburt, except Germani Fossatum, which he palaces near Gümüshane, and Lytarizon which is identified with the Roman city Olotoedariza between Satala and Nicopolis.

180 I visited Altintepe in July 1990. It is slightly further west than the position for Tzumina as indicated by Procopius, but from the elevated scarp commands a view of the east-west road as well as a southern route emerging from Pülümür. In addition to the Urartian walls can be seen later ashlar faced works.

181 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.4.13; N. Adontz (1970) 118 places the latter two monasteries near Bayburt.

182 Discussion of sources in N. Adontz (1970) 257, 466 n. 12b; and N. Garsoïan (1989) 470-1.

183 N. Adontz (1970) 281-88.

184 MX 3.20.

imperial government's involvement in religious matters. In the mid-fifth century, Anatolius negotiated with the Persian king from Theodosiopolis to acheive the release of the *Catholicos*, Sahak the Great, and later appointed his envoy as Archbishop.[185] Little else is known of the Christian community around the city, but throughout late antiquity, Theodosiopolitan bishops are recognised: in A.D. 448 Peter is consecrated bishop; bishop Manase attended the A.D. 451 council of Chalcedon; bishop Peter was present at the council of Constantinople in A.D. 553; and Theodore presided at the A.D. 590 council held at Theodosiopolis itself.[186]

Only a few historical events are known about the city which can illuminate how Theodosiopolis and the territory of Karin functioned within frontier defence. Loyalties so close to the frontier were at times susceptible to disaffection and local quarrels. In the autumn of A.D. 502 Kavadh, in alliance with the Sabir Huns, moved via the Araxes valley to the upper Euphrates plain and assaulted Theodosiopolis.[187] Within days the governor, Constantine, rebelled, encouraged by his animosity toward Anastasius, and surrendered the city to the Persians. With choice treasures and captives led away to Persia, Kavadh reinstalled Constantine as his *marzpan* with a Persian garrison. In the spring Eugenius, *dux* of Melitene, scored mild successes against enemy forces in northern Mesopotamia, but unable to draw the Persians into a pitched battle, he moved against and retook Theodosiopolis.[188] Further incentive to strengthen the frontier was prompted by the ease with which the Sabir Huns sped across the Armenian plateau and pillaged Roman holdings in A.D. 515; cities were walled and tax waivers granted to the unfortunate by Anastasius.[189] During the first quarter of the fifth century, the imperial government took advantage of the Persians' preoccupation with a Hunnic war, and began improving the fortifications near Persarmenia.[190] The initial Anastasian restorations may be dated to this period, but firm consolidation of the region awaited the reign of Justinian, when the old

185 MX 3.65, though the envoy's appointment may be a medieval elaboration.
186 N. Adontz (1970) 284, 474; *DGHE* 834-5.
187 *Chron. Josh.*, 48.
188 *Chron. Josh.*, 51-2.
189 Mal. 16.17; C. Capizzi (1969) 207.
190 Procopius, *Wars*, 2.2.10.

trans-Euphratene satrapies were placed under direct imperial control of the newly created *magister militum per Armeniam et Pontum Polemoniacum et gentes*, installed at Theodosiopolis. However, fluctuating loyalties still complicated regional cohesion. Just over one hundred kilometres north of Theodosiopolis, near modern Ispir, was the mountain fortress of Phragium, from which the Persian satrap Symeon managed the gold-mines of King Kavadh. In A.D. 530, Symeon surrendered the fortress to the Romans retaining the mines for himself. Shortly after this, the Persarmenian generals Narses and Aratius defected to Roman arms, and their youngest brother Isaac surrendered the fortress of Bolum, east of Theodosiopolis.[191] Symeon was charged with numerous mountain villages, but soon fell foul of pro-Persian magnates, who murdered him. Symeon's family continued to rule the mountain area, until it was announced that the new client, Amazaspes, was plotting to deliver Theodosiopolis and other regional forts to the Persians. His executioner and former friend, Acacius, succeeded him and levied an unpopular tax, for which he was slain; his assassins barricaded themselves in Phragium; the region was divided by rebellion.[192]

Anastasius had envisioned the city as a base from which to launch forward operations against Persarmenia,[193] a role maintained throughout the next two centuries. In the A.D. 543 campaign, the general Valerian encamped at Theodosiopolis, where his imperial forces were joined by Narses, his Eruli auxiliaries and a muster of Armenians.[194] By the end of the sixth century Theodosiopolis was the chief base from which to preserve lines of communication to Lazica and exert pressure on the fractious mountain tribes in the Pontic Alps and Iberia; such action was crucial for protecting Roman interests in Colchis and denying Persian access to the Black Sea.[195] Similarly, the patrician Justinian seems to have used the city to conduct secret negotiations with disaffected nobles of Persarmenia in A.D. 572.[196] The Persians appraised the worth of

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191 For these defections see Procopius, *Wars*, 1.15.26-33.

192 Procopius, *Wars*, 2.3.1-7.

193 Procopius, *Wars*, 1.10.18-19.

194 Procopius, *Wars*, 2.24.12.

195 Men. Prot., 18.6.80-5, *Cod. Th.* 2.15-16; L.M. Whitby (1988) 201 and 212.

196 Evagr. 5.7.; J.Eph., *HE.*, 2.20; N. Adontz (1970) 267-8; L.M. Whitby (1988) 250-1.

Theodosiopolis and subordinate towns of the upper Euphrates. In the spring of A.D. 576, Khusro attacked Karin through Persarmenia, attempting to restore Persian influence in the region. Although successful in destroying minor settlements, the Persians did not take Theodosiopolis, and the king's campaign ended in an embarrassing defeat.[197] In A.D. 607 the Persian army sufferred severe casualties in an assault against the city. However, when Theodore approached, announcing himself as Maurice's son, the gates were opened and the nobles accepted the Persian host.[198] The city was regained under Heraclius, and as late as A.D. 653, Theodosiopolis was still envisioned as a centre for assembly and offence, as is indicated in the war plans of Constans II against the Arabs.[199]

The events in Karin underline the advantages and disadvantages communities so close to the Persian sphere presented. Winning the loyalty of the Armenians was crucial in maintaining local control. A single disgruntled officer could cost the imperial government several years in tribute and the permanent loss of territory. Conversely, tempestuous ethnic bonds stretched into Persarmenia, and if properly cultivated could bring high-level defectors, or the bloodless conquest of strategic sites. To obtain these loyalties, the government invested heavily in impressive military construction, and supported the evangelization of the country through monastic patronage in the highlands, and ecclesiastical building in the cities. When civilian settlements such as Bizana no longer found a garrison in their presence, the government continued to support them through civic schemes. Every effort was made to assure Armenian subjects that the imperial government, or church, was interested in their welfare.

The site of Satala lies approximately forty-five kilometres north of Erzincan and is now occupied by the modern village of Sadak.[200] Located near the head-waters of the Lycus (Kelkit) and the Acampsis (Çoruh)

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197 For Khusro's campaign see J. Eph., *HE.*, 6.8-9; Th. Sim. 3.12.15-15.10; Evagr., 5.14, Men. Prot., 18.6; and L.M. Whitby (1988) 261-4.

198 Sebeos, 23.

199 Sebeos, 35.

200 For a general introduction to the site see F. and E. Cumont (1906) 304-12; T.B. Mitford (1974a) 165-171, (1974b), (1977), and forthcoming survey edited by C.S. Lightfoot; use has been made of notes from this survey.

rivers, Satala stood on the Roman road between Samosata and Trapezus, and monitored the northern routes into Asia Minor.[201] It is difficult to date Satala's establishment precisely. The site was perhaps temporarily occupied during the campaigns of Corbulo,[202] but permanent occupation cannot be guaranteed until A.D. 76, when a milestone mentions the legionary base; however, the earliest inscription comes later in the second century.[203] Throughout much of its history, Satala was garrisoned by *legio XV Apollinaris*, attested in the sources and by sixteen stamped brick tiles from the site.[204] No similar tiles have been uncovered for its predecessor, *legio XVI Flavia firma*, whose stay was less than forty years and is indicated by two inscriptions.[205] Coin remains indicate continual occupation from the second through seventh centuries. The roughly 'playing card' outline of the walls corresponds to early imperial design, but the core of the wall itself is Justinianic.[206] By the sixth century the walls had fallen into a precarious state.[207] The defences were largely rebuilt and provided with a forewall and and moat. The eastern corners had projecting turrets and towers at regular intervals along the northern and eastern walls[208]

The civilian settlement, consisting initially of legionary families, developed within the walls, but soon spilled north and east beyond the garrison, as natives responded to the needs and advantages of long term occupation, not untypical for legionary bases in the east.[209] If we accept a number of mediaeval passions, it is possible to date the Christian community at Satala to the reign of Diocletian, when the young Eugenios, a native of the city, was martyred at Sebastia; later he was invoked as

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201 T.B. Mitford (1974a) 165; A. Bryer and D. Winfield (1985) 33.

202 B. Isaac (1990) 410 n. 186.

203 T.B. Mitford (1974a) 170.

204 *Not. Dig., Or.*, 38.13. *Legio XV* had served with Corbulo in the area, and after being stationed at Satala constituted the backbone of Arrian's force: Tac., *Ann.*, 15.25; Arrian, *Ektaxis*, 5.15, 24.

205 *Contra* D. Van Berchem (1983).

206 F. and E. Cumont (1906) 345; T.A. Sinclair (1989) 330; however, see caution expressed in J. Crow (1986) 84.

207 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.4.2-3. The reliability of this account has been questioned by B. Croke and J. Crow (1983) 147; in defence see L.M. Whitby (1987) 102-2.

208 An accurate plan is forthcoming in C.S. Lightfoot's survey of Satala.

209 D. Magie (1950) 1436, 1465; B. Isaac (1990) 139, 281; *contra* T.S Parker (1987) 183.

Satala's patron.[210] Gregory the Illuminator began his conversion of northern Armenia and Iberia from Satala in the early fourth century.[211] Later, Basil wrote an epistle discussing problems the civilian community was having with its bishop. A final mention of the civilian settlement describes the Persians' attempt to destroy part of the city.[212]

Little which predates the sixth century is visible at the site; although at the south-west tower several stages of construction are preserved.[213] Beyond a gully north of the garrison walls bones, masonry, and pottery sherds reveal the area of the civilian settlement. Illegal excavations unearthed a lined brick channel of a bath-house in the settlement area. *Spolia* found on the site indicate that there was continual occupation during late antiquity, which thinned out after the seventh century until the early modern period. On the high ground west of the city is an ashlar-lined cistern, still providing the site with fresh water.[214] South-east of Satala are the remains of what Cumont and Mitford took to be an aqueduct.[215] However, the area had been the origin of several early Christian funerary inscriptions and was covered in roof-tiles.[216] Now surveyed, the structure has been confirmed as a basilica, perhaps that of St. Eugenios. On a slope north of the fortress are the remains of a late Roman block house, commanding views of the north-east, north-west, and south-east valleys.[217]

In the second century Satala had been the assembly point of at least two major campaigns: Trajan's Armenian campaign and Arrian's response to the Alani.[218] Furthermore, the emperor accepted honours from client kings of Albania, Iberia, Colchis and Pontus.[219] By the third

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210 Evidence discussed in A. Bryer and D. Winfield (1985) 166 and 168. For Satala's military families see D.H. French and J.R Summerly (1987).

211 Agathangelos, 425; C. Toumanoff (1963) 458-9.

212 Basil, *Ep.*, 102 (A.D. 372); Procopius, *Wars*, 1.15.12 (A.D. 530).

213 F. and E. Cumont (1906) 345. The south-east tower was illegally exposed by villagers, and surveyed in July 1990.

214 T.B. Mitford (1974b) 230 n. 8 notes now lost terracotta pipes which delivered the water to the garrison.

215 F. and E. Cumont (1906) 343; T.B. Mitford (1974b) 235 n. 13.

216 T.B. Mitford (1974b) 221, 233.

217 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.4.5 mentions the construction of a *phrourion* nearby.

218 C.S. Lightfoot (1990) 117-8.

219 Arrian, *Perip.*, 4.1 and 7.3; T.B. Mitford (1980) 1198.

century Satala and its environs required significant restoration work by the imperial government.[220] Nearby, the Sabrina bridge was refurbished by the emperor Decius around A.D. 250.[221] Efforts were largely in response to the damage regional defences received from the Gothic raids of A.D. 255-7. Troops deployed to Trapezus from *legio XV* may have facilitated the brief capture of Satala by Sapor in A.D. 256.[222] An ornate dedication to the emperor Aurelian in A.D. 272 may indicate further building at Satala as the city's strategic and economic position along the Armenian frontier increased.[223]

On two occasions during the early fourth century, Satala may have been a base for supporting Armenian conflicts with Persia. In the early 350s king Khusro of Armenia, in reaction to Sapor's support of his enemies, broke his accord with Persia and sent a special tribute to the Roman emperor. The Roman army gave its support to Khusro in his successful repulse of the Persian counter-attack.[224] It is not entirely clear where these troops came from, but a second Persian invasion mentions Satala directly. In A.D. 354, when Khusro died, and his son Tiran journeyed to Constantinople to receive his crown from the emperor, Sapor dispatched another army against what he hoped to be a disorganised realm.[225] The Armenians drew up their forces in the Mrul river valley just to the north-east of Satala, and defeated the Persian force.[226] It is arguable, in the first case, that military assistance was provided from Satala, among other locations. In the second case, the Armenians positioned their army close to Roman territory for strategic reasons. Their general, Arshavir Kamsarakan, had been active in negotiations with the Romans prior to the battle, and may have hoped to receive troops in the company of the newly crowned Tiran. Such a hope was well-founded, for

220 T.B. Mitford (1974a) 169-70, (1977) 1207-8.

221 D. Magie (1950) 1568 n. 29; *CIL* 3-14184/14.

222 Zos., 1.33; *RGDS* 18; T.B. Mitford (1974a) 169.

223 *CIL* 3-14184/3; T.B. Mitford (1974a) 170.

224 MX 3.10; Faust. Buz., 3.8, who mentions the Armenian victory, but not the Roman help.

225 MX 3.10-11; Faust. Buz., 3.12.

226 MX 3.10; Faust. Buz., 3.21.

a decade earlier Constantius II had sent a force under the *praefectus*, Antiochus, to crown Khusro.[227]

In the middle of the fifth century measures were again taken to bolster the defences of Satala. The imperial army had decreased its presence in the east, relying on peaceful relations with Persia to allow resources to be diverted elsewhere. In A.D. 441, Persian forces invaded Roman Armenia, Cappadocia and Syria, to express their dissatisfaction with the Roman refusal to contribute toward the joint defence of the Caucasus passes.[228] This incursion revealed the debilitated state of Satala, and legislation was enacted to rectify the neglected fortifications.[229] The inroads of the Sabir Huns in A.D. 515 are likely to have again weakened the frontier around the Lycus and Euphrates valleys, but no direct evidence indicates that repairs were made as a result.[230]

In A.D. 530 the Persian general, Mermero, invaded Roman Armenia with thirty thousand soldiers and Hunnic mercenaries, and bypassing Theodosiopolis, pitched camp near the eighth milestone from Satala.[231] The Roman generals Sittas and Dorotheus had already assembled sixteen thousand men at the city. One thousand of these Sittas led into the surrounding hills. The following day the Persian host closed on Satala and began pillaging the unprotected civilian settlement to the north. From higher ground Sittas advanced his force against their rear, masking his small numbers by the amount of dust thrown up. Simultaneously, the main Roman contingent emerged from the walls and engaged the Persians. The battle raged throughout the day, but in the end Mermero withdrew his force and brought an end to the campaign. Possibly as a consequence of this assault, Justinian began rebuilding the dilapidated fortress.[232] Along the Lycus valley west of Satala, two other prominent sites were given attention. At Colonea (Sebinkarahisar), on

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227 MX 3.5-6.

228 Theod., *HE.*, 5.37.5; J. Lydus, *Mag.* , 3.53; Z. Rubin (1989) 38-39.

229 *Cod. Th.*, 2.15-16; L.M. Whitby (1988) 207 n. 19.

230 Mal., 16.17.

231 Procopius, *Wars*, 1.15.9-17 is the only source.

232 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.4.2-5; suggested by L.M. Whitby (1987) 101-2 as one possible sequence of events. However, it is also feasible that the repairs were made before the A.D. 530 campaign.

the site of an Armenian fortress once refurbished by Pompey, but by the sixth century in ruins, Justinian rebuilt the defences. And at Nicopolis, another Pompeian settlement shattered by an earthquake in A.D. 499, the emperor constructed walls and a monastery dedicated to the forty-five saints.[233] No mention is made of Satala in the second half of the sixth century, but ongoing conflict in Ciscaucasia ensured that Satala remained a key to northern operations.

Although the advances of A.D. 608-10 brought the Persian army against Satala, and, according to Sebeos, the city was taken, the defensive network seems to have checked movement further along the Lycus valley. Roman resistance around the upper Euphrates was fierce, and after initial setbacks, Heraclius established the fortress as a base for his counter-attacks.[234] The demise of Satala in the seventh century is due less to Islamic destruction than the dissolution of the north-south lines of communication along the Euphrates.[235]

Like Melitene, Satala developed from a rural military-post into a lively frontier city. The communities which sprang up around Roman fortresses, apart from protection, enjoyed the higher standard of living which followed with the introduction of imperial engineering and the investment of funds into the local economy. The repairs made on bridges may only have offered indirect evidence of the government's concern to cultivate the settlements, but certainly the sort of tax relief extended in the wake of invasions, indicates a realisation by government that continued revenues were dependent on a prosperous and loyal frontier. The position of Satala again aimed at the control of a specific area, but the fortress's history indicates that it exerted an influence beyond the immediate region. The Armenian royalty could draw upon the tangible benefits of direct Roman intervention in a crisis, or simply use the presence of a legionary base to bolster morale. Both cases hint at how the defence of individual localities featured in the wider defence of the empire.

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233 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.4.6-7, and 12-14; F. and E. Cumont (1906) 296-302.

234 Sebeos, 23 and 26. The successful resistance of Satala is maintained by T.S. Brown, A. Bryer, and D. Winfield (1978) 26; contra the interpretation of C. Foss (1975) 722.

235 T.B. Mitford (1977) 506.

§ 5. The Black Sea and Pontic Alps: Trapezus:

The port-city of Trapezus, modern Trabzon, is located near the south-east corner of the Black Sea.[236] Never an Armenian city, Trapezus was established on a spur of the southern slopes of the Pontic Alps in the seventh century B.C. as a Sinopean colony. Proximity to the Pyxites river (Macka Dere) and the Zigana pass granted the city nearly year round access to the Armenian plateau; though shorter routes existed, they could only be used in clement weather.[237] Despite a number of lesser harbours further east, Trapezus represented the principal port for routes across the Pontic Alps throughout antiquity.[238] A Hellenistic city grew around the rock acropolis which dominates the harbour. In 36 B.C. it became the base for the royal fleet of the Roman client Polemo II. When Roman expansion increased in Ciscaucasia, it became obvious that firm control of the coast would be a logistical requirement. Corbulo supplied his legions from the city in A.D. 58, and in A.D. 64 the entire kingdom of Polemo II was incorporated into Galatia, with the Roman fleet stationed at Trapezus.[239] Five years later, citizens of Trapezus and coastal tribes, led by a fleet commander, erupted into revolt and slaughtered the garrison of an auxiliary cohort. This action and the ongoing difficulty with piracy resulted in an increased military presence at strategic points along the Black Sea shores during the first and second centuries; Trapezus received vexillations detached from nearby Cappadocian legions.[240] In A.D. 129, the emperor Hadrian improved the harbour facilities, but otherwise Trapezus

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236 For a concise description of the topography and history of Trapezus in antiquity see F. and E. Cumont (1906) 363-71; and A. Bryer and D. Winfield (1985) 1-16, and 178-82.

237 A. Bryer and D. Winfield (1985) 48-9.

238 A.H.M. Jones (1971) 538. Smaller sites such as Rize or Batumi were essentially fortified outposts serving the needs of local communities, protecting secondary land routes, or policing the coast; see A. Bryer and D. Winfield (1985) 12.

239 Tac., *Ann.*, 13.39; D. Magie (1950) 374ff., and 433.

240 Tac., *Hist.*, 3.47-8; A.B. Bosworth (1976) 70-1; R. Syme (1981) 277; and B. Isaac (1990) 42-50; with a discussion of continued military occupation through to fifth century at 233. Evidence for legionary detachments discussed in T.B. Mitford (1974) 163; A. Bryer and D. Winfield (1985) 181.

remained a lacklustre military port, short of amenities.[241] During its heyday, the Roman fleet, the *Classis Pontica*, numbered forty ships, which mainly supported efforts at subduing brigand clans to the north-east.[242] When relations were good, troops could be levied from these tribes.[243] Even after the headquarters of the imperial fleet was transfered to Cyzicus in A.D. 175, Trapezus remained a central port amongst the coastal defences and by the third century received *legio I Pontica*.[244] However, Trapezus was never a populous city,[245] and as part of the Roman frontier, its functions were largely to remain as an administrative centre for the tribes of the mountain hinterland, to harbour ships engaged in both trade and curbing piracy, and to control lines of supply and communication to Roman forces in Armenia.[246]

Evidence for structural remains before the seventh century is minimal.[247] In addition to a number of temples, the city possessed two walls; it is likely this refers to the citadel and circuit walls.[248] In the sixth century, coastal routes and passage over the Pontic Alps regained importance with Roman expansion into Lazica and consolidation in Armenia; as a consequence, Trapezus enjoyed imperial attention. After incorporating Trapezus and its neighbourhood into *I Armenia*,[249] Justinian constructed an aqueduct in honour of St. Eugenios, refurbished many of the city's churches, and restored public buildings and presumably the defences. Much of this work came under the direction of Bishop

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241 Arrian, *Perip.*, 16.6; H.A. Manandian (1965) 79 dates the rise in Trapezuntine economic power to these improvements.

242 Josephus, *Bell. Jud.*, 2.16.1. The fleet had a northern base in Bosporus. For a concise history of the *Classis Pontica* see C. Starr (1941) 125-9. For Roman relations with these Pontic tribes see R.W. Edwards (1988) 129-134. For literature discussing coastal brigandage see B. Isaac (1990) 45 n.77.

243 Arrian, *Ektaxis*, 7; discussed in A.B. Bosworth (1977) 234.

244 For evidence of Trapezus as a military port in the early fourth century see Zos., 2.33. For garrion of the *I Pontica* see *Not. Dig., Or.* 38.16 and B. Isaac (1990) 168 n. 28.

245 Contrary to Zos., 1.33, A. Bryer and D. Winfield (1985) 179-80 calculated the civil population as never exceeding four thousand.

246 F. Cumont (1923) 109-227.

247 A. Bryer and D. Winfield (1985) 180-249.

248 Zos., 1.33; A Bryer and D. Winfield (1985) 181.

249 *Nov.*, 28, preface; and *Nov.*, 31.1.

Irenaeus, and an inscription dates its completion to A.D. 542.[250] In addition to the fortifications and garrison at Trapezus, a number of small forts stood along the route leading through the Zigana pass. Most held less than a cohort, and it is not known how long they were maintained.[251] In the late sixth century, Trapezus was active as a supply base for both land and maritime activities in Colchis, and undoubtedly played a major role in the exchange of luxury goods with Lazic merchants.[252]

A single recorded event displays the role Trapezus played in local defence. In A.D. 254 Gothic raiders commandeered Bosporan ships and sailors and launched a series of raids against the south-east coast of the Black Sea.[253] Their early victories caused general panic, and the population began to withdraw into mountain refuges. However, the Roman commander at Pityus, east of Trapezus, successfully engaged the Goths. Three years later a larger assault took place, and the Goths maximised the naval skills of their captives; this time Pityus fell and the rural dependents of Trapezus poured into the city.[254] The Goths did not seriously hope to take the city, whose normal garrison had recently been enlarged. However, one evening when the watch grew slack and drunk, the Goths slipped over the wall and opened the gates. Trapezus and its territory were ransacked.

A weakness in the defence of Trapezus and the Pontic coast lay in the tenuous loyalty which local inhabitants felt towards the imperial government. During the early empire a rebellion co-ordinated by a native officer had to be put down. When the Goths swooped along the coast, not all the Trapezuntines showed the same spirit of resistance as some of their northern Mesopotamian contemporaries. Gregory Thaumaturgus has left a *Canonical Epistle* addressing, at points, how Pontic communities should

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250 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.7.1. Other evidence noted by A. Bryer and D. Winfield (1985) 182 n. 39.

251 *Not. Dig., Or.*, 28.16, 18, 19, 37, 38; discussed in N. Adontz (1970) 75-84.

252 Agathias, 3.19.3, and 3.20.6. Roman control of Black Sea trade discussed in D.C. Braund (1984) 94. On luxury trade into Lazica see J.G.F Hind, (1983-4) 91-7; D. Braund (1991) 224-5.

253 Zos., 1.32; B. Isaac (1990) 49-50.

254 Zos., 1.33.

treat those who abetted the raiders.[255] Some had plundered the property of slain neighbours, and were to suffer excommunication.[256] Others, striving to recoup their own losses, made themselves Goths by appropriating the belongings of unfortunates; these were to be excluded from prayer and publicly accused.[257] Those citizens who escaped from the pirates might find themselves sold into slavery by Pontic provincials.[258] Worst of all there were those who forgot they were Christians and joined the ranks of the barbarians, acting as guides and helping them plunder; these were held in excommunication until judged by a bishop.[259] At times of crisis, loyalty to imperial or local government was not always at a premium amongst the Trapezuntines. Both the government and the Church increasingly penetrated the mountains south and east of Trapezus. But even in the late sixth century, despite the growing number of recruits assimilated by the imperial army, the tribes surrounding Trapezus were slow to relinquish their isolation and brigand lifestyle.[260]

Trapezus and the surrounding forts attest the importance small sites had to supply and communication on a large scale in the control of Armenia.[261] When the Romans were unable to suppress piracy, the tribes of the Pontic Alps remained recalcitrant, and the prosperity of regions beyond the Pontic coast was hampered. In such a volatile environment, loyalties were never cemented, although Christianity made significant efforts at establishing rules of conduct to curb brigandage and ally the Pontus to imperial government.

§ 6. Conclusions:

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255 See D. Magie (1950) 705-107 for a discussion of Gregory's *Epistles*. R. Van Dam (1982) surveys the career of Gregory, see esp. 302-5 where Gregory's role as local leader is examined.

256 Greg. Thaum., *Canons* 2,3, 4, 8, and 9.

257 Greg. Thaum., *Canon* 5.

258 Greg. Thaum., *Canon* 6.

259 Greg. Thaum., *Canon* 7.

260 Agathias, 5.1.2; R.W. Edwards (1989) 133-4. G.E.M. de Ste. Croix (1981) 477-9 goes too far in suggesting that the Trapezuntine disloyalty was typical of the low morale of the frontier.

261 D.C. Braund (1989) 38.

In sum, the foundation of frontier sites aimed to achieve limited and local goals. Usually, the Roman choice of a site, regardless of the existence of a previous settlement, had as its initial purpose the securing of a river crossing, the domination of a valley, access to major highways, or the control of passes. A fortress or fortified settlement provided its immediate region with a refuge during times of crisis, and during periods of peace a deterrent against low-level brigandage. Local economies improved, as provinces developed well-organised market centres in which to operate; a wider range and amount of goods were exchanged, and foreign investment was injected into the frontier region.

During periods of warfare both the cities and the imperial government realised that they could not rely on a widely-distributed army to meet threats. It became obvious that in a siege, only a handful of technicians, like Ammianus' *protectores*, were necessary to co-ordinate the running of engines, watch over equipment, or drill militia. Leadership was provided by important civic and religious figures. As long as care was taken in properly constructing fortifications, maintaining armouries, and keeping cities as well-supplied and as sanitary as possible, the *limitanei* and average citizen could admirably hold an enemy at bay for months.

Retaining the loyalty of these citizens was a crucial factor in a strong local and imperial defence. Most capitulations were the result of treachery when city walls were strong, or submission before a fight when the state of defences was poor. Traditional Armenian power structures and customs were often at odds with firm control over the frontier. During the late fifth and early sixth centuries, the imperial government enacted a series of reforms which, while often retaining aspects of Armenian offices, ensured that senior commanders in a region were allied to the emperor; this action brought whole aristocratic families into the empire who eagerly competed to hold offices both locally and abroad. Such legal reforms were gradually reinforced with new building projects throughout Armenia. The imperial government tried to secure the loyalty of peasant communities through civic and ecclesiastical construction, tax concessions, and the support of the Church, whose leadership was crucial during the most critical moment of eastern frontier warfare: the siege.

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Christian Leadership and Urban Defence

§ 1. Introduction:

This chapter will explore the rise of Christian leadership along the north-east frontier and the role it played in local defence. Evidence will be drawn from the Pontic and Cappadocian provinces, northern Syria, northern Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Georgia; the implication-- which this exploration will hopefully support-- is that there are many recurring phenomena throughout the length and breadth of the region, and that this 'north-eastern frontier' can be viewed as a loosely uniform society. Christian clergy rose to power because they made themselves accessible and highly visible; they secured their authority by publicly associating themselves with traditional bases of power, but surpassed non-Christian groups by either offering alternative images of authority or where possible monopolizing these images.[1] The role ecclesiastics played in a military capacity will be given special attention in this chapter. Conflict was often present in this region. If Christian clergy were to maintain positions of power it was necessary for them to exercise their authority in military situations as much as anywhere else. In trying to form a method of setting out the evidence, I have found it impossible to give equal attention to every ecclesiastical figure which I have encountered in the sources. Instead, selected individual figures will act as case studies of particular phenomena or characteristics, which are postulated as being typical for the entire region.

§ 2. Ceremonies and the network of command within frontier communities:

In order to provide any effective leadership during a military crisis, Christian leaders needed to have the confidence of large portions of their communities. Two ways in which this respect was obtained were by the maintenance of ceremonies which allowed the Church to moderate daily life in the cities of the frontier and the distribution of social benefits which

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[1] W.H.C. Frend (1967); R. MacMullen (1984) 102-119; and R.L. Fox (1986) 545, 623-27, and 668-81.

indebted the peasant population to the Church. This combination of ceremonial patronage and charity will be examined briefly before moving on to an examination of the part played by the clergy in local defence.

By the fourth century, Christian ecclesiastical leaders exerted a pervasive influence within their communities.[2] From birth till death the activities of urban Christians were mapped out by the Church. A bishop oversaw the individual's entrance into the world and the initial cleansing of the soul of the sin of Adam, and when they quitted their life, a bishop would both arrange that bodies would be collected, and a final resting place be set aside.[3] Between birth and burial, the Church provided festivals and feasts, and continuity to daily life.[4] The church's control of festivals had to be tightly asserted. It is clear that the older celebrations still enchanted the citizens of the frontier cities. As late as A.D. 497 the people of Edessa celebrated a rite "at which the heathen tales were sung; and the citizens took even more pains about it than usual." The revelry proceeded for a whole week and the entire city fell into debauchery:

"...they were going up in crowds to the theatre at eventide, clad in linen garments, and wearing turbans, with their loins ungirt. Lamps were lighted before them, and they were burning incense, and holding vigils the whole night, walking about the city and praising the dancer until morning, with singing and shouting and lewd behaviour. For these reasons they neglected also to go to prayer, and not one of them bestowed a thought in his duty, but in their pride they mocked at the modesty of the fathers..."[5]

Joshua next reflects what was probably a sermon or at least the Church's interpretation of consequent events. For he records that God warned the people of their errant ways by causing the colonnades and the *tepidarium* to collapse. Few individuals were killed, and this was declared as a sign that God's clemency was momentarily greater than his wrath. Soon afterwards, an edict was announced which exempt artisans from a tax levied every fourth year. A Christian celebration then began:

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[2] A.H.M. Jones (1963) 17-18; W.H.C. Frend (1979) 36-9.

[3] *Chron. Ed. 540*, 29: construction of the baptistry in A.D. 370. *Chron. Ed. 540*, 13: bishop's construction of a cemetery in A.D. 324.

[4] Urban and rural life revolved around carefully planned festivals and everyday ritual; see W.A. Meeks (1983) 140-63; S.R.F. Price (1984) 101-32; R.L. Fox (1986) 66-8, 90-92.

[5] *Chron. Josh.*, 30: The dancer referred to seems to be the popular entertainer Timerius who plunged the city into all sorts of depravities, see *Chron. Josh.*, 27.

"The whole city rejoiced and put on white garments, both small and great, and carried lighted tapers and censers full of burning incense, and went forth with psalms and hymns, giving thanks to God and praising the emperor, to the church of St. Sergius and St. Symeon, where they celebrated the Eucharist. They then re-entered the city, and kept a glad and merry festival during the whole week, and enacted then that they should celebrate this festival every year."[6]

Church leaders recognised the need to sponsor and control celebration.[7] When threatened by non-Christian ceremonies, such as the wild parties of Timerius, they replaced them with something more institutional. In the case cited above, attention should be given to the overlapping of praise given at once to God and the emperor, and the merging of civil and religious affairs under the auspices of the local church.

Ceremonies allowed church leaders to galvanise their communities and allay common concerns.[8] When on the 23rd of October A.D. 499 the sun was eclipsed and the populace of Edessa smitten with alarm, bishop Peter immediately was able to organise massive public prayers:

"He took all his clergy and all the members of religious orders, both men and women and all the lay members of the holy Church, both rich and poor, men, women, and children, and they traversed all the streets of the city, carrying crosses, with psalms and hymns, clad in black garments of humiliation.... and so, by the prayers of all the holy ones, the light of the sun was restored to its place, and we were a little cheered."[9]

The speed alone which must have been necessary to put together a moderate reaction to the sun's eclipse attests the organisational skill of the urban clergy. It would seem that given the recurring nature of tragedy along the frontier, public mechanisms for voicing woes and expressing the links of the community in their suffering were perpetually employed by the Church. Public prayers typically followed outbreaks of pestilence and special intentions were even voiced to protect the visitors of a city.[10] Thus

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[6] *Chron. Josh.*, 31.

[7] For the absorption of pagan mysteries and festivals by Christianity see A. Grabar (1968) 35 and 41; J. Geffcken (1978) 389-91; S.G. MacCormack (1981) 62-7, 121; and R.A. Markus (1990) 107-121.

[8] Although the interpretation of ceremonies might differ among various sectors of a community, they served more to ease friction and promote cohesion by giving tensions a visible and displaced form; see W.A. Meeks (1984) 142; S.R.F. Price (1984) 108, 11-14; R.A. Markus (1990) 118-19, 21; and D. Handelman (1990) 41-8.

[9] *Chron. Josh.*, 36.

[10] *Chron. Josh.*, 44. Such public rituals became an increasingly common response to crises; see E. Patlagean (1977); A.M. Cameron (1978) 104-7; P. Brown (1982a) 124-6; and R.L. Fox (1986) 679.

those located in the centre and those visitors from rural satellites were brought together in times of crisis by both misfortune and the consequent rituals which made visible the connections.

Without the structure provided by Church leaders, the frontier communities occasionally fell into disorder. During the A.D. 503 siege of Amida, John the bishop died. For a time there was no central ecclesiastical figure present to admonish the people and prevent the proud and boastful behaviour from raging unchecked. When the new bishop was chosen from one of the monastic communities within the city, he immediately set about publicly rebuking the people, especially the magnates, and had published a personal vision concerning the city's fate. In this revelation an angel had appeared to him and warned that God's wrath would befall the city if the mighty did not turn and help their poor brethren.[11]

The organisation of ceremonies replicated the existing pattern of asymmetrical social relations.[12] The poor were dependent on the elites to organise expensive rituals, and hence the dominant role of church leaders and their benefactors was perpetually evoked. Wealth was given a concrete, if symbolic, form in both the small but widely distributed gifts such as crosses, garments, and candles, and also in the more sumptuous items such as incense, icons, and banners which played an instrumental part in Christian celebration.[13] In controlling the civic ceremonies, ecclesiastical leaders ensured that their notions of community were the ones expressed, at the expense of their rivals.

Works of charity also proved helpful in building support for Christian leadership. During the late antique period the construction of hospices, orphanages, and even civic maintenance and intervention in the market place was increasingly managed by the Church.[14] During the horrific famine which struck Edessa during the winter of A.D. 500/1 ecclesiastical leaders organised the sanitary disposal of corpses and set up

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[11] Zach. Mit., 7.4.

[12] R.L. Fox (1986) 80-2, 92; and D. Handelman (1990) 15, 23-28, and 49-52.

[13] For examples of such endowments see *Chron. Ed. 540*, 60 (a senator giving a silver tabernacle to the Great Church at Edessa); *Chron. Ed. 540*, 61 (the *magister militum per Orientem* providing a silver sarcophagus for the bones of St. Thomas); and Zach Mit., 74 (the consul Isaac Bar 'Ai furnishing costly vessels and garments for the church). Such legacies are highly prizeded by local communities, see M. Mauss (1954) 41-43.

[14] J.B. Segal (1955) 116-117; E. Patlagean (1977) 193-5; H. Chadwick (1980) 11; and R.H. Weaver (1987) 368-81.

infirmaries for the living.[15] Bishop Nonnus of Edessa was recorded as having constructed, in addition to several churches, a place for invalids, convents, defensive works, bridges and level roads.[16] Church leaders even had some degree of influence in setting the price of corn. In A.D. 503, bishop John of Amida published an account of his divine revelation wherein he warned that those hoarding corn and neglecting the mouths of the poor were only saving up grain for the enemies of the city.[17] However, Christian leaders do not always exhibit the best record in support of their communities. When in A.D. 525 a terrible flood washed through Edessa, the Bishop, Asclepius, was recorded as having abandoned his flock to find safety in Antioch. After a seventy-day absence, he died. Only later did his community bring Asclepius' body back to rest in Edessa.[18]

There is nothing new about elites patronizing civic construction. However, when Christian elites enter into such projects, it is worth noting that Church funds became increasingly entangled in what may be seen as the responsibilities of the State-- ie., fortifications, maintenance of roads and bridges, etc., --resulting in greater enfranchisement of ecclesiastical leaders. That is to say, the interest of Church and the State merged. It is also worth noting that the frontier population in times of peace looked increasingly to the Church hierarchy to provide guidance and patronage, and such leadership continued in times of war.

§ 3. Church Leadership in Local Defence:

The role which Christian clergy played in military affairs along the entire eastern frontier has been greatly under-emphasised in general studies in English of the late ancient world. Jones gives the false impression that the Church and the military were, by and large, widely separated in their activities, and that only the dregs of society entered the

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[15] *Chron. Josh.*, 42.

[16] *Chron. Ed. 540*, 68: Nonnus was consecrated in A.D. 458.

[17] Zach. Mit., 7.4. Local governments were often slow in responding to food shortages; see P. Garnsey (1988) 257-61. Christian leaders provided local intiative to restore some of the control of regional food supply lost through imperial intervention, P. Garnsey (1988) 267-8.

[18] *Chron. Ed. 540*, 91-91.

clergy with a military background.[19] Markus states that active Church participation in warfare was inconceivable, "foreign to the cast of mind of Greek Christianity... there was neither the need nor the scope for clergy to take over the running of cities or armies."[20] Later, he goes so far as to claim that the Byzantine East "was too complex a society for the church to dominate."[21] In both statements, Markus is granting a state of detachment probably never even striven for, and certainly never attained, by Christian leaders in the east. Like their western counterparts, the ecclesiastical leaders along the frontier not only oversaw military affairs when no civic authority was present,[22] but did so often in conjunction with the administration or as the trusted agent of the imperial government. It is only recently in general studies that the clergy have been noted as essential to the survival of the traditional urban government.[23] The remainder of this chapter will explore the military functions of the urban-based clergy of northern Mesopotamia and Armenia.

After the civic military authorities, ecclesiastics were the most obvious sources of inspiration and direction. With the Constantinian reforms,[24] the chain of command within the imperial army evolved. The fourth-century emperors formulated a new system in which civic officials were relieved of their traditional military roles.[25] As the rhetoric of frontier warfare took on an increasingly religious tone, the authority of the clergy could even, in many cases, supersede that of the military.[26] Furthermore, given the nature of warfare along the north-eastern frontier, it is not surprising to see urban-based ecclesiastics leading communities in a military capacity. Under Constantius II, a defensive strategy was

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19 A.H.M. Jones, (1964) 922ff.; usually it was to avoid conscription, he claims, that soldiers entered upon a religious life. Jones does not discuss the civic role of ecclesiastical leaders in his chapter on "The Church" (1964) 863-937; however, there is a brief discussion in (1940) 190-210.

20 R.A. Markus (1974) 166.

21 *ibid*, 168.

22 For a western study, see W. Klingshirn (1985) 183-203.

23 J. Herrin (1987) 72-73; L. Bréhier (1949) 526-29 had discussed the Church's civic capacity earlier, but was equally brief.

24 A.H.M. Jones (1964) 97-100.

25 G.A. Crump (1973) 91-103, at 91; on the fourth- century army see R. Tomlin (1987); on the growing tension between civil and military authorities see E.A. Thompson (1947) 73-9.

26 T.D. Barnes (1985) 126-36 for early use of the Christian religion as a mechanism of frontier warfare.

developed which would remain in effect for the next three centuries.[27] By avoiding pitched battles and increasing the number of fortified settlements, Roman leaders aimed to keep their casualties to a minimum. The Persians would be drawn into long campaigns which would both neutralise their cavalry and archery advantages, and waste the already inferior strategic resources of Sasanian Iran.[28] The attempts of Sapor in A.D. 359 to lure imperial forces into a single decisive pitched battle ended in failure, and despite the loss of Bezabde, the defensive posture of the Romans was successful. It was only through the failure of Julian's expedition that the empire lost significant frontier areas.[29]

In spite of the Persians' largely unfulfilled desire to crush Roman armies in the field, it was still necessary for them to make advances in northern Mesopotamia and focus on the capture of cities and their trade routes.[30] Persian weakness in both military technology and natural resources was notorious, and wars between the two great powers had broken out because of their great disparities.[31] Even during times of peace in the third through fifth centuries, trade was tightly controlled by the Roman authorities lest military technology or large quantities of raw materials should pass into Persian hands. East-west trade was restricted to Artaxata, Nisibis, and Callinicum until the sixth century, when it was confined to Dara and Nisibis.[32] Thus, it was in the interest of the Sasanian kings to conquer the cities of northern Mesopotamia, not only for the technical skills of their inhabitants, but more importantly to gain control of specific nodal points which could exploit the mineral-rich Armenian hinterland.

During most of the late ancient period, peaking in the early sixth century, the cities of the Roman East saw a great increase in building

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[27] L. Dillemann (1962) 224.

[28] B.H. Warmington (1977) 509-520; V. Chapot (1907) 136-42.

[29] B.H. Warmington (1977) 515-517.

[30] On the cities and trade routes see A.H.M. Jones (1971) 215-22, and H.A. Manandian (1965) 72-82; on the strategic importance of these cities see J. Matthews (1989a) 51-7. D.S. Potter (1990) 17, 370-80, points out that the northern Mesopotamian cities were loyal Parthian holdings, so that their subjugation was of further interest to the Persians.

[31] E.A. Thompson (1982) 9-15; on poor Persian siege equipment see V. Chapot (1907) 193-5.

[32] *CJ*, 4.63.4. For tight trade controls see R. MacMullen (1970) 333-41.

projects and urban development.[33] In northern Syria, agricultural expansion allowed greater revenue to be amassed within urban centres.[34] Archaeological evidence along the eastern Mediterranean coasts supports a view of increased trade and civic wealth.[35] Christian communities had acquired a legitimacy within these great urban centres and began to share and eventually command an increased amount of wealth.[36] It was in the interest of Christian leaders to protect their cultural and economic base rooted in the city. As such, one would anticipate the clergy playing a significant role in the defence of the frontier during times of conflict.

§ 4. The Military Background:

A precedent for holy men becoming involved in military conflicts was already latent in the Old Testament, and along the north-eastern frontier such images were upheld as *exempla* for members of the Christian priesthood who found themselves saddled with military responsibilities.[37] Similarly, among late antique pagan society we find examples of holy men coming to aid their communities during a military crisis. Sampsigeramos, a priest of Aphrodite, organised farmers in northern Syria to check the advances of Sapor in A.D. 252.[38] These forces were little more than lightly-armed skirmishers, but when the Persian king recognised the garment of Sampsigeramos as that of a holy man, he

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[33] K. Randsborg (1991) 15; S.J.B. Barnish (1989) 385-400 for a review of currentscholarship; M. Hammond (1974) 26-28.

[34] K. Randsborg (1991) 50-51 points out that increased precipitation permitted more cultivation in northern Mesopotamia than is any other Roman period; however, C.B Stevens (1966) 92-124, dismisses the likelihood of climatic change, but emphasises the abundance of pasture land in the east, 92-95. See G. Tchalenko (1953-8) for the most thorough exploration of urban and village growth in Syria.

[35] T. Lewit (1991) 48-9, 59-63, and 85-88; K. Randsborg (1991) 126, shipwrecks in the eastern Mediterranean do not decline until the beginning of the eighth century; S.J.B. Barnish (1989) 396-98. However, as a note of caution concerning the uneven spread of wealth see M. Hendy (1989).

[36] A.H.M. Jones (1964) 894-5; R.L. Fox (1986) 577-85 for the vitality of the eastern cities; 663-681 for the growth and dominance of the Christian communities within these cities.

[37] See, for example, R.Thomson (1975) 329-341. On the contribution of Old Testament literature to an aggressive imperial stance during the period, F. Dvornik (1966) 278-402 is useful; also see J. Trilling (1978) 262-3 for a discussion of religious heroic models for a Christian empire.

[38] On Sapor's A.D. 252 campaign see D.S. Potter (1990) 46-7, and 290-308.

brought a halt to the combat and offered to meet Sampsigeramos in conference. Sampsigeramos had communicated previously with the king by letter, and was able to persuade Sapor to receive him as the ambassador for the region. According to Malalas, a slinger struck Sapor during the conference, causing negotiations to be broken off. The Persian force withdrew, harassed the entire way by Sampsigeramos' militia.[39] In pre-Christian Armenia, there was a direct connection between the successful outcome of military adventures and the honour due to the gods and their priests. After assisting the Parthians in putting down a rebellion, King Khusro was very meticulous in his victory celebrations. First, he paid homage to his family ancestors at their temples, offering up white oxen, rams, horses, and mules, in addition to gems, silks, and other fantastic treasures. Second, he gave one fifth of all war plunder to the Armenian priesthood.[40] Obligations to the dead also played a part in the formulation of war aims.[41] Again, as the Armenian priesthood was responsible for the maintenance of temples of the dead, they may have been involved in formulating any policy of vengeance through war. In a later edict, the Armenian King Tr'dat is quite clear on the connection between war and appeasement of the gods, for when he had lived amongst the Romans, he had observed how careful they were in honouring their deities with gifts and sacrifices. Such offerings would bring divine favour, but neglect of the gods would bring devastation to nations.[42] Indeed, the initial appearance of Christianity posed something of a threat to this tight relation between religious piety and military victory:

"You yourselves know how from the time of our ancestors we were granted many victories and peace by the help of the gods, and how we subjected all races and held them in obedience. But when we were not able to please the gods with worship and favourably incline their will towards us, then in their anger they deprived us of our great authority. So we command you in the matter of the sect of Christians... that such people be found and exposed..."[43]

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39 Mal.,12.26; D.S. Potter (1990) 325, holds there is little reason to believe the Sampsigeramos episode, but offers no evidence to support this conjecture.
40 Agathangelos, 22.
41 Agathangelos, 123.
42 Agathangelos, 128-29.
43 Agathangelos, 135.

From its initiation into Armenia, Christianity continued to uphold the essential connection between religious devotion and national, particularly martial, success.[44] Gregory the Illuminator warned Tr'dat and his nobles that if they did not embrace the Christian God, all their glory would be swept away. Without reverence to the new religion and his Lord's sanction, Armenia would soon find herself accursed by this mighty Divinity and crushed:

"If you refuse to hear the preaching of the word of life, then He will strike you and kill you with vengeful and cruel blows, and He will judge you by means of foreign enemies, and also taking revenge on you will bring you to death."[45]

Christianity did not easily place her aegis over the military establishment along the borderlands of Armenia. In Agathangelos there is evidence of conservative pagan resistance, for when Tr'dat began marching his army against the pagan centres around the city of Artashat, he met with opposition:

"And here the demons took visible form in the shape of a multitude of cavalry and a force of infantry, bearing lances and javelins, rushing forward like men armed with spears and standards. With a great shout they raised a cry and fled, rushing into the temple of Anahit whence they attacked those who had arrived. From the building they showered down on the men below..."[46]

As time went on, the Christian forces became increasingly dominant: towns and fortresses were devoted to God; the nobles heavily endowed the church; the army was widely used to destroy fire temples and construct Christian chapels;[47] and the old pagan priestly families were re-educated by Gregory and his monks into a new Christian priesthood.[48] Indeed, so bonded were the new religious leaders and the military establishment, that when Gregory and his son, the bishop Aristakes, and the bishop Albianos journeyed to join the council at Nicaea, they were, in one exaggerated account, accompanied by the four senior commanders of the

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[44] C. Toumanoff (1963) 43-8, and 138-9; N. Adontz (1970) 273-288. H. Chadwick (1980) 10 indicates this connection is true throughout the late ancient world.

[45] Agathangelos, 242.

[46] Agathangelos, 779; see also 786.

[47] Agathangelos, 811-12. Such actions mirrored the strong co-operation between the Church hierarchy and the Roman government; see G. Fowden (1978) 53, 56-7, and 77-8.

[48] For examples see Agathangelos, 785 (settlements devoted to God); 802, 837 (endowments); and 840 (conversion of priesthood).

Armenian borderlands, other magnates, and seventy thousand hand-picked troops.[49] That Gregory was accompanied by such a large guard is unlikely. However, that Agathanglos believed it reasonable that high-ranking ecclesiastics should be accompanied by an elite military force is important, as is the role Gregory would play arranging a military pact between the two powers. Through the mediation of the Illuminator, Tr'dat and Constantine concluded an alliance, "holding their faith in the Lord Christ as an intermediary so that they might constantly and for ever keep faithful love between their kingdoms."[50] Christian leaders and the Christian faith, far from pacifying a martial spirit, increased the martial bonds between patrons and clients, empire and allies. By continuing develope traditional connections between war and religion, the clergy were bound to participate in the hostilities endemic to the frontier cities. As the spiritual and secular guides of these communities, ecclesiastics would be expected to play a dominant role in war as well as in peace.

Christian leaders were often well-suited for handling military contingencies. Nearly every inhabitant of the eastern frontier was graphically familiar with the process of war, and the clergy should not be seen as being more timid than anyone else. Warfare was so commonplace as to imbue theological discourse with military metaphors. Let us turn to the *Acts of the Disputation* to see how complicated arguments are made accessible through the use of martial images.[51] When bishop Archelaus and Mani first debated, the heretic claimed that God had separated by walls that which is good from that which is evil. Archelaus in turn asked, how then has the Evil One entered this world, which is part of the good King's territories,

> "lest he first cast down [those walls] as we have heard that such things have been done by enemies, and indeed with our own eyes we have quite recently seen.... when a king attacks a citadel surrounded by a strong wall, he first uses ballistae and projectiles; then he endeavours to cut through the gates with axes, and to demolish the walls by battering rams; and when he at last obtains an entrance, and gains possession of the place, he does whatever he likes, whether it be his pleasure to carry off the citizens into captivity, or make a complete destruction of the fortress, or... grant indulgence..."[52]

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[49] Agathangelos, 873. The practice of drawing these impressive honour guards from the borderlands continues; see for example Faust. Buz., 4.5.

[50] Agathangelos, 877.

[51] For a brief discussion of this episode see S.N.C. Lieu (1985) 97-100.

[52] Archelaus, *Disputations*, 24.

Towards the close of the debate, Archelaus fired out the most damning invective in his arsenal, by tagging Mani as the instrument of the Antichrist used like a spy or raider,

"but a mean and base one, used by him as any barbarian or tyrant may do, who in attempting to make an inroad on people living under righteous laws, sends some select agent,... with the view of finding out the exact magnitude and character of strength possessed by the legitimate king..."[53]

Later, Mani, on the basis of Matthew 12.46-50, proposed that Christ, in asking "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" was not born of the Virgin Mary, and thus did not possess human nature. Bishop Archelaus, after attempting an exegetical response, moved to terms comprehensible to his flock:

"...I shall prove this to you by illustrations suited to your capacity. A certain king who had taken up arms, and gone forth to meet an enemy, was earnestly considering and planning how he might subdue those hostile and foreign forces. And when his mind was occupied with many cares and anxieties..., a certain man broke inopportunely in upon him, and began to remind him of a domestic matter."[54]

Such graphic dicta suggest something very close to a firsthand view of the mechanics of siege warfare. Archelaus' readiness to use this imagery hints at the advanced development of Christian metaphorical use of martial images.[55] However, in the archbishop's case, it is clear that his familiarity with technical descriptions of sieges comes from the careful observation of one who has seen cities razed and communities subjected. Similarly, we find the following passage in the *Chronicle of Edessa*:

"The year 715, 'Absamia Kashisha (presbyter), son of the sister of the blessed Ephrem, composed poems and discourse upon the coming of the Huns to the territory of the Romans."[56]

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[53] Archelaus, *Disputations*, 36. On the role and status of spies see V. Chapot (1907) 199-205.
[54] Archelaus, *Disputations*, 48; Although I am uncertain, this passage appears to hide a criticism of the Roman emperor for not protecting certain provinces, or perhaps it was inspired by Valerian's defeat: "For what else should be a king's care, so long as the time of war endures, than to provide for the safety of the people of his province and look into military matters."
[55] The use of military language in ecclesiastical writings may have been well-established due to the long tradition of viewing the Church as at war with Satan, see Dvornik (1966) 558-610, esp. at 577.
[56] *Chron. Ed. 540*, 47: A.D. 404.

Unfortunately, 'Absamia's poems no longer exist. But it should not surprise us that along the frontier even the clergy would turn their learning towards martial topics. Clearly, church men had enough knowledge of defensive matters to be trusted with the construction of city defences.[57]

Furthermore, many members of the clergy came from a background which included previous military training or service. On both sides of the frontier there were Christian leaders who had experienced the military life. A notable example from the early fourth century is that of Milles, who forsook his military vocation to live an ascetic life. In time, he was ordained bishop of an unknown Persian city where his evangelical works met with hardship and failure. Cursing the city, he left for Roman territories where he worshipped in Jerusalem, before moving on to study with Egyptian monks. At a later date he was martyred. His former Persian city was eventually demolished and sown with corn for offending the king.[58] Nerses, the *Catholicos* of Armenia, was selected for this position in part for his enviable military prowess. At the time of his ordination he was serving in the military office of Senekapet, and was acclaimed pastor of the Armenian people by the army of king Arsak.[59] In addition to possessing an entire network of contacts throughout the lands of the empire's eastern enemies, ecclesiastical leaders themselves may have been former captives in Persian territories, as was the case with Nonnus, bishop of Amida.[60] In the sixth century, the patriarch of Antioch was himself formerly the highest-ranking military officer on the frontier.[61] When Euphrasius, the former Patriarch, fell into a boiling cauldron of wax, he was succeeded by Ephrem of Amida. At the time of his appointment, Ephrem was still the *Comes Orientis*.[62] As Patriarch, he enjoyed the

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[57] *Chron. Josh.*, 91: in which we find bishop Sergius overseeing the construction of the fortifications at Birta in A.D. 505/6. See also ecclesiastics discussed under individual cities in Chp. 2, and the Bishop Thomas at Dara below.

[58] Soz., 2.14; Sozomen makes mention of Syrians having recorded his *vita*, but I have found no other record, nor have I discovered the circumstances of his martyrdom.

[59] Faust. Buz., 4.3.

[60] *Chron. Josh.*, 83: Nonnus was ordained in A.D. 505.

[61] *Chron. Ed. 540*, 97: In A.D. 526 Ephrem of Amida was ordained bishop of Antioch.

[62] Zach. Mit., 8.4; Mal., 17.22; for a discussion of Ephrem's career see G.Downey (1938) 364-70.

supreme patronage of the emperor, who out of an old fondness backed Ephrem and his policies, and "paid attention to what he wrote to him."[63] It is likely that "what he wrote" concerned not just ecclesiastical matters, but military ones, given Ephrem's previous career.[64]

Later, those who may not have come from a military background still found themselves in the thick of military operations. There are examples of men, who, although it is not known whether or not they came into their office with military experience, nonetheless took part in martial ventures. Bishop Eusebius of Emesa was held in high enough opinion to be invited by the emperor Constantine on his proposed expeditions against the Persians.[65] The construction of the important fortress city of Dara was placed under the supervision of Bishop Thomas of Amida.[66] Furthermore, the ranks of the 'officers' were swollen with clergy:

"And when they began by the help of the Lord and commenced the work, there were as overseers and commissaries over it Cyrus 'Adon and Eutychian the presbyters, and Paphnout and Sergius and John the deacons, and others from the clergy of Amida. And the bishop himself paid frequent visits to the place."[67]

It would be mistaken to believe that Thomas and all his clerics had a deep knowledge of military science, but rather their trustworthiness made them attractive overseers in such expensive military projects. When the city was complete, the emperor appointed the above-mentioned Eutychian as the bishop, a man "zealous and accustomed to the transactions of business." To assist him, John, a soldier from Amida, was tonsured and made priest. After Eutychian's death, Thomas Bar 'Abdiyo of Resaina, "who had been a Roman soldier, and had been appointed steward of the Church of Amida, also vigilant and well versed in business" was

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[63] Zach. Mit., 8.4; Ephrem had been responsible for putting down the blue faction riots in Antioch, Mal., 17.12.

[64] G. Downey (1938) 364 doubts that Ephrem's theological training was of any note. He was chosen for his administrative skills and ruthless energy.

[65] Soz., 3.6; though it is not known at what capacity he served. According to Eusebius, *VC*, 4.56 and 62, Constantine planned to bring a large contingent of priests and a portable field alter, akin to the one accompanying the ancient Israelites. However, this text must be viewed with a degree of caution, see T.G. Elliot (1991) 162-71.

[66] On the strategic location and construction of the fortress city of Dara see J.G Crow (1983) 12-20; B. Croke amd J. Crow (1984) 142-59, esp. 149-50; L.M. Whitby (1986b) 737-83.

[67] Zach. Mit., 7.6.

consecrated bishop of Dara.[68] The joint operations of civic and religious communities at Dara also had a positive effect for the outlying frontier communities, as imperial craftsmen were subsequently lent to benefit the nearby monastic houses and villages of the Tur 'Abdin.[69] And these monasteries themselves were constructed to take on the form and function of small fortlets when necessary.[70] When a mutiny later broke out in Dara, it was under the leadership of the priest, Mamas, and his associates that the revolt was defeated.[71] Given its strategic importance, Dara was perhaps more likely to vaunt a clergy of military background.[72] However, this city does not stand out too boldly when compared to other cities of the period. Within a city, all members of the community were expected to participate in the defences, regardless of vocation. In Amida, monks would, during time of crisis, find themselves allotted the responsibility of safeguarding a section of the wall.[73] Zachariah provides two further examples of men whose previous civic responsibilities would have included participation in military matters. Nonnus of Seleucia, who had been the governor of Amida during the siege of A.D. 503, was subsequently appointed the city's bishop. He died a few months later. The selection of the next bishop reinforces a notion that knowledge of civil and military matters were, if not requisite in the frontier cities, at least attractive:

"And in succession to him again, in the presence of three bishops, as the canons require, Nonnus of Martyropolis, Arathu of Ingilia, and Aaron of Arsamosata, who were on the spot, they ordained Moro Bar Kustant, the governor."[74]

Domitianus, bishop of Melitene, and a relative of the emperor Maurice, accompanied Khusro, as did Gregory, the archbishop of Antioch, when the Romans initiated a campaign for the deposed king's re-installation (A.D.

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[68] Zach. Mit., 7.6.
[69] A. Palmer (1990) 123.
[70] *ibid*, 131.
[71] Procopius, *Wars*, 1.26.5-12. W.E. Kaegi (1981) 65 for a discussion of the Dara revolt; 75 for the conviction of the imperial government that the destinies of Church and State were intertwined.
[72] It is possible that clergy are receiving weighted attention due to the survival of ecclesiastical sources; see B. Croke (1983) 77-8.
[73] Procopius, *Wars*, 1.7.22.
[74] Zach. Mit., 8.5.

590).[75] It might be argued that Gregory's capacity was in no way military, but this was not the case for Domitianus. It was Domitianus who had encouraged the emperor to undertake the expedition, rather than to allow the Persian empire to fall into a chaotic civil war-- this latter suggestion being the advice of both the senate and the Patriarch John Nesteutes.[76] When the Roman force entered the siege to regain Martyropolis, it was bishop Domitianus who negotiated with leaders of the garrison, who dispatched the *praepositus sacri cubiculi* to convince the Persians to quit the city, who used troops at his disposal to convince, even pressure, Khusro to hand over the turncoat Sittas to the general of the East for punishment and execution, who brought the disloyal soldiers to justice, and who orchestrated the celebrations for the city's salvation.[77] The bishop was not in actual command of the force; the army of the East was sent out under its own commander, Comentiolus.[78] Yet, Theophylact implies that Domitianus had the authority to withdraw military aid from Khusro.[79] It is most likely that Domitianus had no official authority as a field commander, but that his tremendous influence allowed him to exert pressure both on Roman officers and Khusro. Whatever the case, bishop Domitianus' prestige is evident from the sources. He was a blood relative of the emperor Maurice, and personally dispatched by imperial decree.[80] Beyond his spiritual discipline and pleasant demeanour, he was known for being a capable man of action: decisive, quick, and shrewd in secular operations of the highest order.[81] Clearly he impressed Khusro, for when Gregory had removed to Antioch and the general of the East, Comentiolus, had been removed for offending the Persian, Domitianus

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[75] Th. Sim., 4.14.5-6; Evagr., 6.18. On which see L.M. Whitby (1988) 297-304. E. Honigmann (1953) and R. Paret (1957) discuss the career of Domitianus.

[76] J. Nik., 96.10-13; Th. Sim., 4.14.1.

[77] Th. Sim., 4.15.8-18; Evagr., 6.19.

[78] Th. Sim., 4.12.8-10 and 4.14.5-6; Evagr., 6.18, the force marched under Comentiolus, but was to attend to Khusro's directions.

[79] According to Th. Sim., 4.15.14-16, bishop Domitianus warned Khusro that the mass of Roman troops could be turned against him if he did not comply with the interests of the empire; and at 5.3.4-7, Domitianus is on the verge of leaving Dara with the entire Roman army when Khusro offends the Christian community by taking residence in a group of religious buildings.

[80] Th. Sim., 4.14.5; Evagr., 6.18.

[81] Evagr., 6.18.

remained.[82] Such men must have been attractive to the imperial administration because they provided support for, and adherence to, a system of ideas and political goals in a geographical area rife with conflicting loyalties.[83] In such situations, solitary leaders are the deciding factor, especially during a crisis.[84]

§ 5. Ecclesiastical Leadership During Sieges:

These urban holy men exhibited their martial leadership most clearly at the critical moment of frontier warfare: the siege.[85] It was the bishop who was morally responsible for directing the people and keeping them under control.[86] During the siege, ecclesiastical leaders could circulate widely and rapidly among the defenders; unlike a pitched battle, they could remain highly conspicuous at all times. If we recall the intimate bond which the Church had forged between urban communities and their clergy, we gain a better understanding of how inspirational bishops and their fellows were to the beleaguered citizenry. Upon the walls or throughout the streets could be seen the same men who had baptised them and buried their elders, who had organised famine relief and settled their petty disputes. Now these ecclesiastics, visible to all and at equal risk to their own lives, walked amongst them, administering the sacraments and cheering on the forces. It is "the personal bond between leader and follower that lies at the root of all explanations of what does and does not happen in a battle."[87] Unlike imperial officers, ecclesiastical leaders lived and died in the communities they were defending.[88] In the case of the Armenian clergy, the families of the bishops had, for generation after generation, served the Christian communities in the

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[82] Th. Sim., 5.2.7-3.1.
[83] F. Millar (1971) 1-17; S.P. Brock (1982) 1-19; T.D. Barnes (1985) 130-6.
[84] G.W. Allport (1968) 190.
[85] On the importance of siege warfare in the region see C.P.T. Naudé (1958), and J. Matthews (1989) 53-66, 287-96.
[86] Zach. Mit., 7.3.
[87] J. Keegan (1978) 114.
[88] Throughout the late ancient period the central administration became dependent on local leadership, a dependence which became increasingly strained, see W.E. Kaegi (1981) 14ff; and J. Matthews (1989) 40-1. For the self-reliant nature of the frontier see J.B. Segal (1955) 112-15.

same episcopal capacity. Thus, the clergy provided a continuum between peace-time leadership and crisis leadership. Their concerns were not for the expediency of the moment. Whereas a *dux* or *comes* might leave as soon as the engagement was concluded, the church leaders remained, and their concern for the individual's well-being extended beyond any particular military contingency.

Some of the earliest and most detailed accounts of episcopal leadership during sieges can be found in the stories which surround the efforts of the bishops Jacob and Vologases during the protracted assaults on Nisibis in A.D. 338 and 350.[89] The narratives of these events are extremely convoluted. However, for the purpose of studying the role of church leadership, it is not necessary to distinguish between individual sieges. Jacob had reluctantly accepted the leadership of the Nisibene community: "Because he was conspicuous for his actions and beloved by all and his name circulated in everyone's mouth, he was compelled to accept the office of bishop."[90] It was precisely because of his determined asceticism that the Christian community believed Jacob would be the finest choice for leader.[91] The ascetics, whose loyalty to a wealthy urban-based establishment may be questioned, possessed certain qualities which would make them attractive leaders at times of war. They had an intimate understanding of the importance of obedience to superiors and austere discipline, and it was the norm for late ancient monks to have the responsibility of an entire community ultimately invested in a solitary figure.[92] While the emperor Constantius was mustering forces in Antioch, Sapor invested Nisibis with the best armament his force possessed. Yet all his efforts came to naught due to the bishops's holiness:

"[Sapor] completely surrounded the city, setting up machines of war, commissioning towers, erecting palisades, the areas between strewn with branches placed crosswise, then he ordered his troops to raise embankments and build towers against the city towers. Then while dispatching his archers to ascend the towers and direct their arrows at those

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[89] For a variety of annotated translations on these events see M.H. Dodgeon and S.N.C. Lieu (1991) 164ff. We know almost nothing about the second Persian siege which occured in A.D. 346, and I do not include it in this essay. C.S. Lightfoot (1988) 105-25 has untangled the three separate events as best possible.

[90] Theod., *Hist. Relig.*, 1.7.

[91] S. A. Harvey (1990) 12.

[92] P. Rousseau (1978) 21-32 and H. Chadwick (1981) 11-24, esp. 23.

defending the wall, at the same time he charged others with undermining the walls from below. Yet all these plans came to nothing, rendered useless by the prayers of Jacob..."[93]

Modern readers may find such pious explanations of the Persian failure to be inadequate. Theodoret is not, however, the only ancient source to trace the cause of victory to the holy man's prayers.[94] To underplay such sentiments as influential on the mind of beleaguered Christians is to court folly.[95] Sapor, undeterred by the city's resolve, dammed up the Mygdonius river and used it to demolish the foundations of the city's bulwarks.[96] An immediate onslaught was postponed: perhaps to allow the muddy breach to dry, perhaps to allow the army some rest. While the Persians took their repose, Jacob rallied the Nisibenes from the Great Church. None of the sources say at this point in their narratives that the bishop took to the streets himself, but all are quite clear that his leadership and the leadership of his clergy were responsible for dispelling the impending doom:

"For that holy man, through his prayer, filled with valour both the troops and the rest of the townsfolk, and both built the wall, withstood the engines, and beat off the advancing foe."[97]

"The citizens redoubled their prayers, with the noble Jacob as their intercessor. All those old enough to be of use set to in earnest to rebuild their defences."[98]

"But the bishop Jacob and the Blessed Ephrem with all the church through the whole time of the siege were interceding with God. Finally, the holy bishop raised the strength and morale of the cavalry and of all the inhabitants of the city; he rebuilt the wall and set up a structure and ballista on it, by means of which he checked and drove back the besiegers.

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93 Theod., *Hist. Relig.*, 1.11

94 For the power of Jacob's prayers delivering the city see other sources given in M.H. Dodgeon and S.N.C. Lieu (1991) 7.1.3.

95 As N.H. Baynes (1955b) 248-60 pointed out long ago, "there can be no doubt that the Byzantine lived in a world where miracle could happen and did happen, and that belief in miracles is itself a fact of history which the student ignores at his peril." 248. As J.R.E. Bliese (1984) 11 and (1989) 217-9 illustrate, speeches arguing that one side had a just and divinely sanctioned cause became increasingly important in mediaeval warfare, especially in regard to the morale of the combatants.

96 According to the sources the river was pent up until sufficient force could be released, shattering the walls. As Nisibis lies low on a plain, the height of a dam necessary to create such an effect makes this element of the story dubious. However, in the dry summer heat, the Mygdonius could have been channelled in such a way as to erode parts of the defences; see M.H. Dodgeon and S.N.C. Lieu (1991) 384; *contra*, C.S. Lightfoot (1988) 114-6.

97 Theod., *HE*, 2.30.

98 Theod., *HE*, 1.11.

He accomplished these things although in person he was far removed from the wall, being in God's temple and interceding with the Lord of all."[99]

If one travels to Nisibis today,[100] it is possible to visit the site of Jacob's tomb. The present church contains the saint's reputed sarcophagus, though the building is slightly later than the one from which the bishop may have preached.[101] It is an unimposing building, and certainly during the siege not many of the Nisibenes would have been present within the Great Church. It is therefore likely that through the minor clergy and word of mouth, news of the bishop's sermons was being passed on throughout the besieged city. How much influence Jacob or Vologaeses had on the practical side of defensive organisation is difficult to determine. Nonetheless it is much more important to highlight the psychological boon they provided for the defenders. Always in the backs of their minds would be the notion that within the city's Great Church a holy man was constantly invoking God on their behalf; such beliefs uplift men and keep them fighting when under pressure.[102] Knowledge that prayers were sung ensured the frontiersman of the righteousness of his cause.[103]

Although the make-shift wall was of sufficient height to prevent either a cavalry charge or even scaling-ladders, there was still great anxiety amongst the Nisibenes that the Persians would break through again. It appears that the defenders called upon Ephrem to convince Jacob to rally the troops from the ramparts and insult the Persian host. It may have been a great effort for Jacob to appear, for we know he died shortly after the

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[99] *Historia S. Eph.*, 6-7.

[100] In the summer of 1991, I had the good fortune of visiting Nisibis with C.S. Lighfoot. We were led into the 'crypt' of the church and shown what is undoubtedly a late Roman sarcophagus. According to Gennadius, *liber de scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, 1, the emperor Julian entered the city and had the saint's remains disinterred. However, Julian is not known to have entered Nisibis. The church is still used by the Christian community, while the building itself is owned by a Muslim family who live in the upper stories.

[101] The present building is thought to be the baptistery of the Great Church, built the year after the siege by bishop Vologaeses; see G. Bell (1982)142-45.

[102] "Yet above and beyond any symbol-- whether it be individual life or a pillbox commanding a wadi in the Sahara-- are all of the ideas and ideals which press upon men, causing them to accept disciplining and to hold the line even though death may be at hand." S.L.A. Marshall, (1947) 161.

[103] A. Palmer (1990) 52-3, 110.

siege.[104] Two phenomena are recorded in connection with Jacob's appearance. Going up into one of the towers and looking upon the army of Sapor, Jacob let fly his own particular salvo:

"...he prayed to God to send upon them a cloud of gnats and mosquitoes. He spoke, and the Lord, persuaded as he was by Moses, delivered. The men were mortally wounded by the heaven-sent darts, the horse and elephants broke their tethers and escaped, plunging this way and that, unable to bear the stings."[105]

"...he discharged no other curse than to ask that mosquitoes and gnats might be sent forth upon them, so that by means of these tiny animals they might learn the might of the Protector of the Romans."[106]

Plagued thus by clouds of insects, the rank and file of the besiegers broke. However, a more significant event convinced Sapor that he should withdraw from the protracted siege:

"When [Sapor] saw the holy man walking on the ramparts he supposed it was the emperor in person who presided over the operations-- for he seemed to be wearing the purple robe and the diadem--, and then he turned in anger on those who had deceived him and advised him to undertake this campaign, guaranteeing the emperor was not present. He condemned them to death, disbanded his army and returned to his royal palace as quickly as possible."[107]

Such Christian leadership during the siege is not entirely unique to the north-eastern frontier, although it is more prevalent there. For instance, when the Chagan attempted to demoralise the besieged in Constantinople by parading in person with his Avars before the walls, the action was met by the Patriarch Sergius striding the ramparts in a rival display of guff.[108]

§ 6. Use of Relics:

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[104] See sources in M.H. Dodgeon and S.N.C. Lieu (1991), 171.

[105] Theod., *Hist. Relig.*, 1.11; on Jacob's intimate relationship and favour with God see 1.3; on his ability to curse 1.4.

[106] Theod., *HE*, 2.30; other versions follow along the same pattern; however, the *Historia S. Eph.*, 6-7 has Ephrem climbing a tower and bringing the swarm upon the Persians.

[107] Theod., *Hist. Relig.*, 1.12; Theodoret, *HE*, 2.30 and the *Historia S.Ephr.*, 6-7, which also discuss Sapor mistaking the figure on the ramparts, place the episode before Jacob takes to the ramparts, but this order lacks narrative logic.

[108] Theod. Sync., 305.13-28.

The clergy often utilised the sacred relics in their possession and thereby achieved the same enthusiasm and loyalty that individual leaders commanded.[109] Two passages in Evagrius illustrate this phenomenon. Although no named ecclesiastical figure is present, we may safely assume that the ceremonies surrounding the use or abuse of relics was tightly controlled by the established church. During his A.D. 544 campaign, Khusro moved against the city of Edessa, goaded on by his desire to disprove the legend that the city would never fall to the enemy due to the special attention afforded to her by Christ.[110] His engineers erected a mound of earth and timber against the city walls, from which the assaulting forces could rain missiles down upon the defenders. The Edessenes immediately excavated a mine down beneath the Persian mound. They filled this tunnel with combustibles, which they hoped to ignite, causing the mound to collapse into the subsequent hollow. However, despite their efforts, the kindling would not burn. If the Persians could maintain their position on the mound, they could clear the wall of defenders and effectively breach the defenses. At this desperate moment, the Mandylion-- the cloth which Christ had impressed his features upon and sent to the ailing Edessene king, Abgar-- was brought forth:

"In this state of utter perplexity, they brought the divinely wrought image, which the hands of man did not form, but Christ our God sent to Abgar on his desiring to see him. Accordingly, having introduced this holy image into the mine, and washed it over with water, they sprinkled some upon the timber; and the divine power forthwith being present to the faith of those who had so done, the result was accomplished which had previously been impossible: for the timber immediately caught the flame... and fire spread in all directions"[111]

When the citizens saw what was happening, they hurled jars of inflammables into the the mine. For three days the wood smouldered. Khusro countered this by diverting the river to douse the flames. The action seemed to provide the final force necessary. Perhaps swept clean of the charred supports, the mound and the Persians' resolve finally sunk

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[109] G. Kitzinger (1954) 87-95 and 103-3; A.M. Cameron (1981a) 24.

[110] On the campaign see J.B. Segal (1970) 115.

[111] Evagr., 4.27. On the legends surrounding Abgar see J.B. Segal (1970) 62-78; on the Mandylion see A.M. Cameron (1983) 80-94; and "The Sceptic and the Shroud", in A.M. Cameron (1981).

into the cavity. Evagrius ends the chapter with what could easily be the end of a sermon, the end of the official story which the Church disseminated after the Edessene victory: "Then Khusro, in utter despair, impressed by the circumstances with a sense of his disgraceful folly in having entertained an idea of prevailing over the God the Edessenes worship, retreated ingloriously." In addition to the Mandylion, Christ also was reputed to have sent a letter to king Abgar via the apostle Thaddeus, the text of which was inscribed above the city gates.[112] This construction must have been arranged by the Christian leaders of the city, who throughout her history cultivated the legend of Christ's beneficence. After his failure at Edessa, the Persian king struck out toward Sergiopolis. Khusro held back from immediate assault and turned toward negotiations. He was told that amongst the many sacred treasures in the city was a golden cross which had been an endowment from the imperial family. Furthermore, in his negotiations with a priest of the city, the king became aware that the remains of St. Sergius rested in a silver-plated sarcophagus. This discovery roused the king's interest, and soon afterward he commenced an assault on the walls. However, when the force reached the city they found the ramparts bedecked with shields and arms. Khusro was mystified, for he had been informed that only the weak and the halt were present in the city. He called off operations and withdrew, according to Evagrius, because he realised that the saint's power had been stirred by his coveting holy relics.[113] Far from shifting the burden of the defences off the shoulders of the common citizen, relics like the Mandylion, or the sacred objects in the walls of Martyropolis, bolstered their hope in salvation.[114] The Mandylion brought the initial spark necessary, but the citizens themselves had constructed the mine and fueled the fire. Similarly, the power of Sergius via his relics did not arm the ramparts, but only provided the guiding impetus. Like the concept of divine Grace, supernatural assistance only appears effective when the inhabitants of the city worked in participation with the Spirit. Yet we must always keep in mind that the resulting legends and propaganda

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[112] Euseb., *HE*, 1.13.

[113] Evagr., 4.28. On the site of Sergiopolis see L.M. Whitby (1987) 102-105, and on the ecclesiastical complex in particular see R.M. Harrison (1984) 105-6.

[114] N.H. Baynes (1955b) 259.

which followed sieges were of equal importance to the event themselves, for they underlined the ability of church leaders to maintain control and cohesion in their frontier communities.[115] An image like that of Christ on the Mandylion looked out upon the siege and judged the successes or failures of the defenders, perhaps adding incentive or pressure to the besieged's action.[116] The urban ecclesiastics used such artifices as the Mandylion to reassert their own hegemony.[117]

§ 7. The Clergy and Capitulation:

Should the city find itself in an untenable situation, the final duties of surrender or, in the case of cities which would or could not resist, submission were often undertaken by the leaders of the church. By the fourth century such activities had become almost the commonplace duty of the bishops.[118] Bishop Heliodorus' efforts in the fall of Bezabde provide an early example of a church leader negotiating the surrender of a city. The Roman city of Bezabde served two functions, one military and one ecclesiastic.[119] The site of the city dominates the access to the central Armenian plateau through the Taurus mountains and was the chief urban centre for the recently-acquired lands of Zabdicene. As such, it was in the interest of the imperial government to place a large garrison there,[120] and of the Church to centre its own administrative and evangelical base. The very fact that the city boasted a bishop indicates that the civilian and Christian population was significant.[121] In A.D. 362 Sapor

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115 As J.B. Segal (1970) 77, points out, the episode of the Mandylion is not recorded in the narrative of Procopius; it is found first some fifty years later in the account of the orthodox Evagrius. Indeed, even in Evagrius' account, the bishop Eulalius finds the Mandylion amongst the broken tiles of a wall.

116 P. Brown and S. MacCormaik (1982c) 212.

117 On the Christianisation of ceremonies like the parading of the Mandylion or of victory rituals see M. McCormack (1986) 100-11; and S. MacCormack (1981) 67-78, and (1982) 298-9.

118 J. Matthews (1989a) 436.

119 On Bezabde see C.S. Lightfoot (1983) and 189-204 G. Algaze (1989) 248-52. G. Algaze discusses locations previously hypothesised for Bezabde-- either at modern Cizre or on the eastern side of the Tigris at Eski Yapi (Fenik). The archaeological evidence now supports a thesis that the Roman fortress at Bezabde was located on the western bank of the Tigris at Eski Hendek.

120 The Bezabde garrison was thrice that of Amida, J. Matthews (1989a) 53.

121 C.S. Lightfoot (1983) 195, n. 1.

besieged the city, and Bishop Heliodorus is known to have entered discussions with the Persian concerning the city's fate. After indicating his willingness to parlay with the Persians by "nods and signs", Heliodorus implored Sapor to break off his siege, as the price already paid by both contenders was high. He met with no success in this petition. Soon afterwards the city fell and her inhabitants were led away into captivity.[122]

During the Armenian rebellion of A.D. 450/1 there is further evidence of episcopal involvement in the resolution of a siege. The Sasanian army dealt a serious defeat to the rebel forces on the plains near the river Tlmut, after which contingents of the Armenian army sought refuge in a nearby fortress.[123] When the ensuing siege proved indecisive, the Persians entered negotiations with the entrapped bishops Yovsep and Levond. The Gospels were brought forth by the Persians, and promises of amnesty made upon them. It is difficult to say whether any of the besiegers were Christians or whether the pagans bringing the gospels forth held a solemn respect for the holy books. Vasak, an apostate Armenian noble, led the force, and perhaps the oaths were of his doing. The clergy agreed to accept a cease-fire and to undertake discussions concerning a surrender, but the soldiers believed that the oaths were empty of any validity. In the end, the two hundred and thirteen Armenians were starved into submission and executed on the spot, while the clergy were led into captivity.[124] The Persian force then proceeded up the Araxes valley to the fortress of the Blue Mountain, where it broke the resistance of the beleaguered garrison. Here the priest Arshen intervened "in an appealing and friendly way" on behalf of the civilian community, but to no avail. Arshen was immediately bound, captives were taken, and many places were put to the torch.[125]

When Amida fell in A.D. 503 and slaughter filled the streets, the elderly bishop of the city met Kavadh with reproaches, stating that such behaviour was beneath the dignity of a king. The massacre was halted, but Amida was still plundered and the remainder of the populace led away

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122 Ammianus Marcellinus, 20.7.1-9. On the fate of the inhabitants see A. Vööbus (1960) 204.
123 Elishe, 106-21.
124 Elishe, 122-23.
125 Elishe, 126.

into captivity.[126] Constantina fared slightly better, at least for the Christian community. Early on, the Jews of the city had attempted, but failed, to betray the city to the Persians.[127] When this foiled attempt was discovered, the defenders began to round up the Jews and cut them down in the streets. It was only after the bishop, Bar 'Adotos, intervened with *comes* Leontius that the slaughter was brought to an end.[128] Before the siege was resolved, the bishop, Bar 'Adotus, approached Kavadh bringing with him wine, dried figs and honey, and loaves of fine bread-- offerings symbolic of the city's appeal for protection, forgiveness, and renewed life.[129] The bishop was a devout and prayerful man, and his closeness to God could be seen immediately by all who gazed upon his face. Constantina, claimed Bar 'Adotus, was a neglected place, ungarrisoned and uncared for by the Roman administration, filled with sad folk. So impressed was Kavadh by this meeting that he granted to the bishop Constantina's freedom; furthermore, he alleviated their suffering by giving to Bar 'Adotus Persian siege supplies for distribution among the people.[130]

When Kavadh sent word to the beleaguered *magister militum*, Areobindus, at Edessa either to accept his *marzban* into the city, or conclude a treaty with him, it was at the Church of St. Sergius that the negotiations took place.[131] Later, Areobindus gathered the loyal militia of Edessa in the Great Church and presented them with awards.[132] In neither case are any clergy mentioned directly, although it would be hard to believe that ecclesiastical leaders were not involved on some level, perhaps organising the ceremonial side of these occasions. When the initial negotiations did not result favourably for the Romans, it was often the case that church leaders would continue efforts to secure the release of

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126 Procopius, *Wars*, 1.7.30-32; the captives were, however, treated with kindness, and in time allowed to return to their homes, although Kavadh claimed they had escaped, 1.7.33-34.

127 Judaeo-Chrisitian relations had been poor ever since the A.D. 363 fall of Nisibis. With Nisibis lost, the Jewish community in Mesopotamia was deprived of mercantile ties and one of her greatest centres of learning; and with the Christianization of the Roman empire, Jews found themselves neglected and marginalised, see J.B. Segal (1970) 41, 101-2.

128 *Chron. Josh.*, 58.

129 E.S. Drowser (1956) 7-8, 37, and 112-14.

130 *Chron. Josh.*, 58; Procopius, *Wars*, 2.13.8-13.

131 *Chron. Josh.*, 59.

132 *Chron. Josh.*, 63.

Christian captives. These efforts may have been an extension of canonical teachings regarding charity and the protection of the poor.[133] Clergy might travel great distances or negotiate the release of captives from far-flung communities. We find, for example, that in the royal city of Ctesiphon, the priest James of Gamuwa conducted a treaty freeing many prisoners from the Persians.[134]

The important place of the Church leaders is underscored in the A.D. 531 siege of Martyropolis, where the Romans were felt disadvantaged because of the recent death of their bishop, Nonnus.[135] Khusro's campaign of A.D. 540 offers further examples of the bishop's prominence during a city's capitulation. Unfortunately, it is often difficult to untangle cowardice or lack of resolve from a realistic reaction to weak frontier defences. The case of Sura shows that some bishops did not always see fit to have recourse to military solutions. When the military commander of the city, Arshak, an Armenian, was slain, the city gave up all hope. Apparently, the co-ordination of the defence had rested entirely on Arshak's abilities, or vainglory, for the day after his death the city sent its bishop to beg clemency. The distressed man tearfully supplicated Khusro, presenting foods and wine and an account of the miserable status of his frontier city. The giving of such gifts by Bar 'Adotos or the bishop of Sura highlights several important features of negotiation. First, the agent delivering the gift is the moral representative of the inferior party. In addition, the recipient obtains almost spiritual rights over the property of the donor.[136] Finally, in returning a greater gift-- in our case clemency to a city-- one is ultimately defining a social relationship and emphasising one's superiority over the giver.[137] The bishop, perhaps somewhat foolishly after a dirge which may have revealed the weaknesses in the city's defences, promised to raise a ransom worthy of the city of Sura. Khusro feigned leniency, but duping the bishop into accepting an escort back to Sura, won the gates through guile.[138] The Persian king slightly

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133 H. Chadwick (1980) 5; for a discussion of the social dimensions of captivity and the evidence see S.N.C. Lieu (1986) 475-505.
134 Zach. Mit., 10.12.
135 Procopius, *Wars*, 1.21-18; Zach. Mit., 8.6, and Mal., 18.66.
136 M. Mauss (1954) 3-11.
137 *ibid*, 72.
138 Procopius, *Wars*, 2.5.8-27.

tempered his wrath, but not his avarice, by allowing the woman Euphemia, newly taken as his wife, to travel to Sergiopolis and there bid the bishop Candidus to raise ransom money for the 12,000 captives.[139] Shortly thereafter the citizens of Antioch fell into a panic, fearing that Khusro would train his efforts on taking their city; the emperor's nephew was present and reinforcements were not expected. They elected to dispatch Bishop Megas of Beroea, who had been caught during a visit by the unfavourable toss of events. Megas called for mercy, oddly implying that the garrison at Antioch was insufficient for her defence, and like the bishop of Amida in A.D. 503, he appealed to the regal dignity of the king not to crush those who could not offer resistance. The bishop then stated that international protocol had been violated, for the Persian had neither given any warning of his intentions, nor allowed the Romans to make preparations.[140] Inspired by this information, Khusro marched his army to Hierapolis, where the citizens, neither trusting the state of their defences, nor wishing to have their adjacent lands wasted, chose to pay the Persian two thousand pounds of silver, despite the presence of a strong garrison. At this point, Megas relentlessly begged Khusro to accept payment of gold and depart entirely from the region. Obtaining a promise from him, the bishop returned to Antioch.[141] There Megas was opposed by Justinian's recently arrived *a secretis*, Julian, who forbade the appeasement of the enemy through bribes, and who denounced archbishop Ephrem for being in collusion with those who planned to deliver Antioch to Khusro. Ephrem showed little confidence at all in the city's defence and fled to Cilicia.[142]

While Antioch made her preparations, the Persian army had descended upon Beroea. Both sides realised that the walls were in poor

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[139] Procopius, *Wars*, 2.5.28-30.

[140] Procopius, *Wars*, 2.6. 14-19; Procopius himself, in commenting upon the actions of Khusro, can hardly believe that the Persian could be so reckless or foolish: 2.6.20. However, Khusro's subsequent advances seem quite reasonable given that Megas had revealed or confirmed the sad state of the frontier defences!

[141] Procopius, *Wars*, 2.6.20-25.

[142] Procopius, *Wars*, 2.7.14-17. The accusations against Ephrem carry some credence. Evagr., 4.25 states that he fled having failed to achieve some scheme and later ransomed the church and her precincts by surrendering sacred treasures. Ephrem may have had a more reasonable opinion of the city's defences, and was perhaps out of favour with the emperor, who was appalled by local leadership buying off the Persians, see G. Downey (1953) 342-4.

condition, and a fixed amount of silver was agreed upon as ransom. The Beroeans could not produce the entire fund, and fled with their animals to the citadel. When Megas returned to Beroea the water supplies were nearly exhausted and an enraged Khusro stood ready to give the city to the torch.[143] Again, with no little audacity, the bishop accused the Persian of acting in a unkingly fashion, and chided him for behaving immoderately.[144] It would seem that the bishop's pluck was in part fueled by the hope that the acropolis would offer some resistance, thus precipitating either a Persian withdrawal or compromise, for when Megas was briefed on the the scarcity of water, he returned as a tearful suppliant to Khusro.[145] It also seems probable that the garrison lacked the zeal to fight. It had been some time since the government had paid them, and the majority willingly joined the Persian's campaign after Megas negotiated clemency for the city.[146]

It is curious that even with the Archbishop Ephrem's flight from the city, the clergy played such a small part in either Antioch's defence or fall.[147] After a visit to bathe near Seleucia, Khusro directed his force to Apamea, and although he stated that his only intention was to accept a thousand pounds of silver, all were in fear that he would create some pretext under which to plunder the environs.[148] In a panic the congregation of Apamea flocked to their bishop, Thomas, who calmed their nerves by displaying a portion of the true cross. Upon seeing the radiant wood, the people felt that their salvation was assured; they wept and rejoiced, and bid their bishop march repeatedly around the body of the church.[149] Thomas thence proceeded to the Persian and assured him that no resistance would be offered; a hand-picked force followed the bishop into his city. As soon as the city was secured, Khusro demanded that all the treasures be confiscated. Although Thomas was not able to stem the

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[143] Procopius, *Wars*, 2.7.1-13.
[144] Procopius, *Wars*, 2.7.19-33.
[145] Procopius, *Wars*, 2.7.34.
[146] Procopius, *Wars*, 2.7.34-37.
[147] G. Downey (1938) 369-70 praises Ephrem's action which saved the Church of the Virgin as an example of brave local initiative when the imperial government ultimately failed to save anything else.
[148] Procopius, *Wars*, 2.11.3-4.; indeed Khusro's greed was all too evident to the Roman ambassadors.
[149] Procopius, *Wars*, 2.11.19; Evagr., 4.26.

draining of earthly riches-- in fact, Evagrius implies he did all he could to pacify the king-- he managed to keep the city's true defence: the wood of the cross.[150]

On the outskirts of beleaguered cities, holy men continued to intervene at times of crisis. During the winter siege of Amida in A.D. 502-3, Jacob the Syrian offered all people succour, friend and foe alike. Dwelling in a cage-like hut one day's journey outside the city so that he might practice his monastic life without distraction, Jacob was confronted by a band of Ephthalite Huns. These rovers found themselves unable to shoot the wondrous man, and when news of the event worked through the ranks of the army, the Persian king, Kavadh, was eager to see who this man was who could stay the blows of his warriors. Upon meeting the man, the king asked forgiveness for the impudence of his Huns, which Jacob graciously gave; this action seemed to relieve the marauders of some injurious distress. Kavadh then granted Jacob whatever he wished from him, and the holy man asked that his fastness be recognised and guaranteed as a sanctuary for those refugees of the conflict.[151]

§ 8. Conclusion:

By way of conclusion, it has been shown that the Church as a frontier institution became responsible, or perhaps usurped responsibility, for many previously civic offices, projects, or mechanisms. The clergy, while rarely holding legitimate military authority, were essential in bolstering the morale of commanders, troops, and citizens. It would be dangerous to slight the tremendous psychological role urban ecclesiastics played in the frontier wars of the East. Their sermons in the churches and harangues from the walls were essential in focusing the community's energy on victory. Certainly, the increased presence of clerics in sensitive positions corresponds with the increased number of old urban elites who themselves became Christians. There is a tremendous amount of continuity between the pagan frontier city and the Christian. However,

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[150] Procopius, *Wars*, 2.11.14-30; Evagr., 4.25: but Thomas was by no means a Persophile. When asked if it was an honour to meet Khusro, the bishop replied, 'not in his neighbourhood'.

[151] Procopius, *Wars*, 1.7.5-11.

when studying the shifting foundations of power in the late ancient world it is important to realise that the rise in charitable beneficence under Christian leadership drew large numbers of peasants into the cities, swelling both the urban population and the support-- and hence power-- of the church elites.[152]

[152] E. Patlagean (1977) Chp. 5.

Christianity and Diplomacy on the North-East Frontier

§ 1. Introduction:

This chapter aims to examine the ways in which Christianity influenced diplomatic policy along the north-eastern frontier. Like the thirteenth-century church lawyer struggling to understand the function of diplomacy in his own day, I have adopted a broad notion of what qualifies an individual to be a diplomat: "a *legatus* (diplomat) is anybody sent by another."[1] The primary roles of such "diplomats" are to establish foreign contacts, to exchange information, and to spy.[2] In order properly to understand late Roman diplomacy, especially with regards to the collection of military intelligence and the vast, politically expedient, network of contacts established by the Church, this chapter also takes into consideration individuals, such as missionaries and hermits, whose occupations connected them with the collection and dissemination of information. The efforts made by both Roman and Persian governments to cultivate regional contacts is an activity essential to an understanding of local defence. Without these contacts the links between the imperial government and frontier communities would weaken and the empire's defences would erode. Ecclesiastical leaders, once again, served as local agents of imperial policy, and deserve study.

Why would the hierarchy of the Christian church participate in negotiations which not only led away from, but also to war? The church obviously had an interest in a peaceful environment, for it is then that religious celebrations could readily be undertaken.[3] But in a period which might see peace dissolved, the church then had an obligation to preserve the interests of its endangered clients and where possible to expand and to

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[1] Guglielmus Durandus, cited in J. Der Derian (1987) 76.

[2] G. Mattingly (1955) chp. 5 sets these roles out for Renaissance diplomats; J. Matthews (1989) 34-5 points out that the Roman government did not have a specific institution to achieve this; however, these roles were still carried out on an irregular basis.

[3] The importance of peace for celebration should not be underestimated. The Arab allies observed two months of religious festivals, and would not fight, see Procopius, *Wars*, 2.16.18, although these celebrations occurred during the flood season, see L.M. Whitby (1988) 197.

recruit in new areas. Therefore ecclesiastical leaders were intimately involved in diplomatic transactions on some level, and as increased political duties were undertaken by clerics, the involvement in foreign negotiations, even on a rudimentary level, increased.[4] Furthermore, ecclesiastical delegates had a distinct advantage over secular ones, in that the political boundaries of the frontier did not restrict faith.[5] It was recognised, if not expected, that bishops would communicate with Christian communities within Roman, Persian, or Armenian territories.[6] Before turning to the Christian influence on diplomacy, it will be necessary to trace the diplomatic history which the Church inherited.

§ 2. Diplomatic Heritage:

It had been the practice of the ancient Greeks to send embassies of respected and prudent individuals purely as needs dictated.[7] There were no permanent foreign ambassadors, as expatriate merchants, scholars, and travellers normally passed information back to their home authorities, and exiles proved a perpetual, if prickly, source of information for either side.[8] When official delegations were dispatched, it was common practice to draw representatives from the wealthy who already had a network of contacts abroad.[9] These men were expected to display an inclination toward justice, tempered by a high degree of patriotism. A premium was placed on education, specifically training which would allow them to remember their orders and recall transactions months later. However, the essential quality was a fine voice and the ability to persuade a foreign audience. Roman embassies were also composed of such talented individuals, but more importantly, they contained illustrious men who

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[4] On Christian diplomacy see J. Der Derian (1987) esp. at 84, 93. As G. Mattingly (1965) 59 has pointed out, a diplomat's business is not always the pursuit of peace, but the preservation, if not aggrandizement of the state.

[5] J. Der Derian (1987) 59.

[6] On the movement of clergy across the frontiers see S.N.C. Lieu (1986) 491-4.

[7] H. Nicolson (1954) 6; D.J. Mosley (1973) 5-6; 9.

[8] Also true during the imperial period, see S.N.C. Lieu (1986) 491-5; J. Matthews (1989b) 35-37.

[9] D.J. Mosley (1973) 43-50 reviews the evidence for the selection of ambassadors in the Greek world.

could impress their audience with social status, dignity, and, to a far lesser extent, refined manners.[10] Like the Greek cities, Rome lacked permanent diplomatic establishments and dealt with foreign missions on an *ad hoc* basis.[11] Without trained staff or even permanent archives, the senate relied largely on the oral reports of generals and *ex tempore* delegations for information, and the collective wisdom of the *patres* for making decisions. Later the emperors, despite modest improvements to official libraries, relied largely on the advice of the *consilium principis*.[12] However, Roman embassies during the Republic and early empire suffered in the eyes of contemporary non-Romans from the emphasis placed on *utilitas:* it was the objective of a Roman delegate to further the interests of Rome, not to compromise, negotiate, or provide an unbiased source of arbitration; this is where late antique ambassadors, especially Christians, differed, at least for a time, from their predecessors.[13] However, there is a high degree of continuity, and many qualities desirable in classical ambassadors continued to be valued in late antiquity.

In the Ostrogothic kingdom, Cassiodorus set out a description for Theodoric of an ideal ambassador which sought to emulate the contemporary Byzantine model:

> "If, indeed, every embassy requires a wise man, to whom the conservation of the interests of the state may be entrusted, the most prudent of all should be selected who will be able to argue against the most crafty, and to speak in the council of the wise in such a manner that even so great a number of learned men will not be able to gain a victory in the business with which he is charged."[14]

The confrontational Roman ideals have not been erased entirely, but they have been mollified slightly by emphasising the ambassador's prudence,

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10 D.S. Hill (1905) 39; H. Nicolson (1954) 17.

11 For the senate's handling of embassies and ambassadors under the Republic see A.E. Astin (1968) esp. 14-15; the Romans usually waited until they were preparing to conquer a region before gathering information, F. Millar (1982) 11.

12 A.E. Astin (1968) 15; on the disorderly state of Republican archives see M. Cary (1919) 67-8; F. Millar (1977) 259-72 for the diplomatic resources available to the emperors, and (1982) 15-20 for the slight resources available for military and diplomatic planning.

13 H. Nicolson (1954) 14-16 on the weakness of Roman diplomacy; although at 11, Nicolson concedes that under a dictatorial system, the Romans could reach decisions somewhat faster than under one more open to compromise.

14 Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 2.6.

more than pure skill and utility. Slightly later Wittigis sent an embassy to Khusro in hopes of forming a defensive pact against Justinian.[15] The Ostrogoths chose their ambassadors with the intention that they should pass through the Roman provinces and across the eastern frontier unhindered. Two priests were found and bribed, one of whom was of high social status and played the part of a bishop; his companion travelled under the guise of assistant. Along their journey they found an interpreter, since neither could speak both Syriac and Greek. Their disguise and success in penetrating the frontier indicate that such a group would not have attracted undue attention. These sixth-century examples introduce certain qualities and features common to late Roman embassies; greater detail can be observed if other qualities of ecclesiastical delegates are isolated.

§ 3. Christianity and Arbitration:

By the late third century both Rome's clients and enemies had recognised Christian clergy as just, honest, and unbiased intermediaries in negotiations, a role inherited from and shared with philosophers in late antiquity; but unlike their predecessors Christian clergy had their rights as judges secured by law.[16] Outside the empire, Christian leaders were perceived as recognisable local figures whose linguistic skills and status made them admirable brokers. Within the empire, it had been common practice for provincial ambassadors to be pagan priests, and throughout Asia Minor it was traditional that the religious figures which surrounded rulers handled petitions.[17] Constantine enacted legal changes which not only legitimated episcopal arbitration, but also set it above the civil courts.[18] Recognition of the moral supremacy of the ecclesiastical courts allowed, if not compelled, the clergy to cultivate their image as one of just and unbiased moderators.[19] Despite fifth-century restrictions which

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15 Procopius, *Wars*, 2.2.1-11.

16 H. Chadwick (1980) 9-10; J. Matthews (1989b) 41-44.

17 F. Millar (1977) 375-463, 492, 537, 542-4; S.R. F. Price (1984) 243-7.

18 Soz., *HE*, 1.8-9; *Cons. Sir.*, 1 and 17, discussed in W.K. Boyd (1905) 90-1; F. Dvornik (1966) 786-88.

19 See for example the exhortations found in *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 10 and 11.

required that both parties willingly submit to ecclesiastical arbitration for such judgement to be valid, a bishop's decision remained final and vested in the cleric's moral virtues; the church had become caretaker of public morality.[20] Furthermore, the church's adoption, as a duty, of the custom of intercession on behalf of clients, and development of the privilege of asylum out of older customs which protected holy ground attest the clergy's increased activity in public life.[21] Yet over the next centuries the interests of secular and ecclesiastical powers were brought closer together, with a result that the church was no longer expected to act without bias. Finally, under Justinian, it was declared that the decisions of the clergy were to be in accord with the interests of the state.[22] Thus on the basis of legal changes we may perceive how the focus of clerical embassies changed from the early fourth century to the seventh century. Originally laws pronounced the clergy as superior to civil judges on the basis of individual virtue, and clerics were expected to be more co-operative than confrontational; by the mid-sixth century, ecclesiastics were being drawn back toward *utilitas*, and their *honestas* was a quality tempered by the interests of the empire. We shall trace this development through individual cases of ecclesiastical delegates, but first let us turn towards the qualities expected or found in Christian ambassadors.

§ 4. Qualities of a Diplomat:

It is difficult to review the qualities of honesty, equanimity, or piety when so much of the ancient evidence discussing individual diplomats is panegyrical; all holy men are regarded as pious and just by their disciples or chroniclers. However, in several cases these qualities are mentioned directly as admirable features in the context of diplomatic service, and so may be reviewed. Constantine, in selecting a bishop to head his delegation to the Iberians, had carefully sought a man of great faith and piety. Such virtues qualified him for this venture in the same manner as his religious

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[20] *CJ*, 1.4.7 and 8; also see discussion with further evidence in F. Dvornik (1966) 782.

[21] W.K. Boyd (1905) 97-100.

[22] For example, *NJ*, 7.2.1; discussed with further evidence in F. Dvornik (1966) 816-28. Also see S.M. Olster (1989) 166-9 and M. Maas (1992) 45-7.

delegate Theophilus, who opened diplomatic and economic relations with the far east and Ethiopia, or Eusebius, the bishop of Emesa, whose piety was a recognised source of authority along the frontier and was invited on the proposed Persian campaign of A.D. 337.[23]

Although normally recognised as neutral, occasions did arise where bishops' actions became suspect, as in the siege of Bezabde in A.D. 359.[24] Soon after the bishop's initial discussions with the enemy commanders, Bezabde fell when a weak point in the wall was breached. However, Ammianus exonerates the cleric from any duplicity, and upholds the belief that bishops could be trusted to transcend political allegiances. A bishop's sense of fair-play might even make him a favourite in two imperial courts. Marutha, the founder and bishop of Martyropolis went on several diplomatic missions to the Persian court on behalf of the imperial government in the early fifth century.[25] King Yezdegerd found him a man of great piety and bestowed many honours upon him. Because of their conversations on Christianity, Yezdegerd softened his stance toward his Christian subjects, a kindness which attracted vehement criticism from the Magi. Even at times of bitter crisis, the piety and spiritual authority of the clergy were accepted as a guarantee for fair negotiations. Perhaps as long-term hostage exchanges fell into decline and localised short-term guarantees were employed, the mediating role of the clergy was able to come to the fore.[26] When the Armenians defeated a Persian force in the A.D. 451 rebellion, the *marzpan* surrendered not to the military commanders, but to the bishops, taking oaths on the gospels that he would repent.[27] The Persian king Yezdegerd II, found the Armenian bishops with whom he negotiated in an early attempt to deflate the

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23 On the Iberian embassy see Theodoret, *HE*, 1.24; on Theophilus, see Philostorgius 3.4-6, on Eusebius of Emesa and Constantine's priestly entourage see Soz., 3.6; Euseb., *VC*, 4.56, and 62.

24 Amm. Marc., 20.7.9.

25 The sources for Marutha and his diplomatic missions are Soc., 7.8; Soz., 8.16; Theophanes, 1.128; and the Armenian *vita* translated and discussed in R. Marcus (1932).

26 A.D. Lee (1991) 369-71; if mutual recognition between Rome and Persia was on the rise, as is suggested by M. Higgins (1941) 281-82, it would be reasonable to say that guarantees offered by Christian priests ranked equally with the brief exchanges preliminary to a greater settlement.

27 Elishe, 66.

rebellion firm and pious, rewarding them with presents.[28] In an incident where Persian loyalists cornered their Armenian counterparts in a mountain refuge, the fullest possible use was made of the Church hierarchy in negotiations. Priests were called upon to speak, the gospels were paraded before the wall as a sign of the agreed sanctity of the discussions, and oaths were sworn; despite all this, however, the Armenian soldiers remained unconvinced of Persian good faith and resisted to the end.[29] After the rebellion had been crushed, the Persian court attempted to reconstruct an accurate picture of the events and mete out just punishment. The *hazarapet* advised Yezdegerd, "if you wish to hear the plain truth, have the leaders of the Christians in Armenia summoned. They will come willingly and explain everything."[30] Sahak, bishop of Reshtunik, who had participated in the negotiations with the *hazarapet* at at the opening of the rebellion, led this embassy. With the help of the *hazarapet* Sahak defended the actions of Armenian Christians, and helped reconcile them to Persian sovereignty.[31]

Such pious men from the frontier could come to the attention of the imperial government in many ways. John the Scholasticus of Amida, who undertook a confidential mission on behalf of his city to see the emperor, was admired as "a valiant man, just and upright, fearing God and forsaking evil", educated and "skilled in dialectics."[32] His piety was celebrated and his two visions of Anastasius' accession brought him into the circle of the new emperor. Local reputation could also qualify clergy for diplomatic missions. John the Hermit of Anastasia, enlisted by the imperial army in A.D. 532, was known amongst the Roman community for his honourable disposition.[33] His contemporary, Sergius the deacon, was sent to the Arabs on their request.[34] When the Persian satrap Mebodes had been jeered out of the A.D 583 negotiations at Amida,

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28 Elishe, 83.
29 Elishe, 122-3.
30 Elishe, 128.
31 Elishe, 130-7; Sahak's earlier contact with the *hazarapet*, 28.
32 Zach. Mit., 7.1; see translators' commentary at 149 n. 2.
33 Zach. Mit., 8.5; 9.6.
34 Mal., 19.61.

Simon, bishop of Nisibis, became essential as the figure accepted by both sides as trustworthy enough to pass proposals back and forth.[35]

In negotiations between elements of the eastern community, the government made a practice of selecting local figures respected for their piety and justice. When the eastern army rebelled in A.D. 588, secular officials failed to gain reception by the troops; however, both the imperial government and the military recognised various local bishops as trustworthy agents.[36] Initially, the Roman commanders themselves tried to appeal to the religious convictions of the army by parading an icon before them, and later sent the bishops of Constantina and Edessa on what proved to be fruitless embassies to the troops.[37] Persian preoccupation with the Turks prevented them from taking full advantage of the discord, and an assault on Constantina was repulsed, but it was not until the army met with bishop Gregory during Holy Week of A.D 589 that the mutiny was resolved. Gregory's speech to the army is laced with exhortations to traditional Roman martial virtues, but clearly Gregory hoped to put moral pressure on the rebels and took care to remind his audience that it was presently Holy Week, a provident time for reconciliation. Gregory's entreaty moved many of the soldiers to tears, and after conversing amongst themselves they decided that they would submit, but declined Gregory's suggestion that Phillipicus be accepted as their commander. Gregory did not wish to be perceived as being bullied, and his response clearly spells out the spiritual fibre behind the authority of the bishop in negotiations:

"Without any hesitation he stated that he was bishop by Divine permission, and had the authority to loose and bind both on earth and in heaven, and at the same time he quoted the sacred oracle ."[38]

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35 Th. Sim., 1.15.1-12. Although given the speed at which the Roman concluded the negotiations, it is unlikely Simon would have had much opportunity to intercede on the Persians behalf, see L.M. Whitby (1988) 280.

36 For the A.D. 588 rebellion, or Monocarton mutiny, see Evagr., 6.4-5, and 11-13; Th. Sim., 3.3.8-4.2. Discussed in W.E. Kaegi (1981) 68-71, and L.M. Whitby (1988) 287-8

37 Th. Sim., 3.1.11-2.9. Troops recruited from the Roman provinces were normally receptive to such appeals, and by the late sixth century it was common for clergy to mediate between mutinous troops and the authorities; see W.E. Kaegi (1981) 70-71, esp. 71 n. 31.

38 Evagr., 6.12. The sacred oracle refers to Matthew 16.19, "I shall give to thee the keys of the Kingdom and whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

After obtaining at least their submission Gregory administered the sacraments to the army and shared a meal with them. After his departure Phillipicus was set above them.[39] Later, when Martyropolis was betrayed to the Persians, and Roman efforts at retaking it flagged, Gregory was again dispatched by the emperor to inspire the troops. However, lack of proper supplies and the onset of winter neutralised any effect the bishop had.[40]

Trust in the neutrality of ecclesiastics became open to question towards the end of the sixth century. Although the Persians resorted to the Nestorian bishop of Chlomaron to negotiate when that city was under a Roman siege, later the emperor Maurice had him arrested for disloyalty.[41] But at the opening of the seventh century the *honestas* of the clergy still encouraged a tolerable environment in which various parties might negotiate. After the deep breach of the frontier in A.D. 615 brought the Persians to the Bosporus, the presence of an associate of the patriarch was necessary for negotiations between the Persians and Romans.[42] Khusro's declaration that he perceived Heraclius as a usurper, abandoned by God, charged any dialogue the Romans hoped to open with a high moral tone: a priest's mediating influence created a link both sides could accept.[43]

In addition to piety and fairness, frontier ecclesiastics possessed other, more tangible qualities which made them attractive agents of negotiation. A pro-Roman background, whether this be attributed to education, travel or marriage links, was desired by both the imperial government and frontier communities; many pre-industrial states are largely the property of families, wherein personal ties between the holders of power are all important.[44] Even if certain individuals cannot be

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39 Th. Sim., 3.5.10 states that Philippicus was accepted with great reluctance.

40 Evagr., 6.14.

41 Men. Prot., 23.7; Anon. Guid. 2; L.M. Whitby (1988) 295.

42 *CP*, p. 706-9; Nic., 9.20-12.2

43 Sebeos, chps. 24 and 26. A.N. Stratos (1968) 115-17 suggested that the negotiations were the senate's initiative, but this does not weaken the role played by the clergy.

44 On the role of education in Romanisation see D. Braund (1984) 9-21, while these non-Romans resided in imperial cities they provided Roman elites with an important exposure to foreign customs, J. Matthews (1989b) 39-40; on marriage links in imperial states see G. Symcox (1974) 4-6.

considered as traditional hostages, the continued education of non-Roman nobles in Roman cities still had the effect of emphasising the dependent status of the foreign states.[45] Gregory the Illuminator and his sons had been schooled in Caesarea and possessed paternal links with the Armenian nobility, while Gregory himself had been raised by the relations of a Roman magistrate. Each Armenian Patriarch from Gregory to Nerses the Great was consecrated in and retained strong ties with Caesarea.[46] Nerses the Great, in addition to his Caesarean tutelage, dwelt, according to one tradition, as a young man in Constantinople where he took a Roman aristocrat as wife; other narratives assign to Nerses an Armenian noblewoman, but dispute neither his western education nor his Hellenistic tendencies.[47] Marutha of Martyropolis came from a noble Armenian family in Sophanene, and may have been the son of the local satrap. However, he was educated in Antioch and established his career first in the empire, attending several church councils in the late fourth century.[48] Sahak the Great, ambassador to the Persian court, and also of the Gregorid house, married his daughter into the influential Mamikonean family and through personal influence obtained the highest military office of *aspet* for his son-in-law.[49] But rivals of the Gregorid house latched on to such western sympathies after the A.D. 387 partition, and Sahak was later denounced to the Persian king Vram for being too sympathetic towards Roman interests. In the company of the Armenian embassy was another priest, Surmak, who was installed as Catholicos of Armenia after Sahak's deposition.[50] Family links were an important element in establishing a wide network of contacts, but they were also a two-edged sword, for by relying on clergy whose roots spread on either side

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45 On the decline of the traditional exchange of hostages see A.D. Lee (1991) 366-7, who concentrates on Persia.

46 Faust. Buz., 5.29; MX 2.74, 2.80.

47 MX 3.16; Faust. Buz. 4.2; Basil, *Eps.*, 92; see N. Garsoïan (1990) 395-6 for other Armenian sources; also see discussion in R. Thomson (1978) 270 n. 3.

48 *Life of Marutha* 18 and 19; Marutha attained minor notoriety by crushing the foot of John Chrysostom's enemy Cyrinus and thus preventing his participation at the council of Chalcedon, Evagrius, 4.15. See R. Marcus (1932) 47-8 for Marutha's early career.

49 MX 3.51; LP pp. 23, 37; Toumanoff (1963) 208.

50 MX 3.63-4; LP p. 23-5.

of the frontier, governments took on the animosity inherent within communities of fluid loyalties.

A crucial factor in successful diplomacy was the ability of a diplomat to express his opinions convincingly, and the church encouraged the study of rhetoric as a standard part of ecclesiastical training.[51] The persuasive skills of Marutha of Martyropolis are said to have brought Yezdegerd to the verge of conversion; their discussions placed him under danger of assassination, and in the end only the king's death stopped the process. Before this Marutha convinced the Persian of the benefits of cordiality between the two great empires, and persuaded both governments to invest in the construction of Martyropolis.[52] The final reconciliation between the mutinous eastern army in A.D. 589 and its commanders was secured by Gregory's stirring words.[53] When the Roman army was bogged down with the recovery of Martyropolis, Domitian was able to brow-beat Khusro into compliance, and his speech before the walls so moved the resisting garrison that they opened the gates.[54]

Any element of erudition or technical skill elevated diplomats in the eyes of their audience. Marutha, the Chalcedonian bishop sent by Maurice to Khusro's court was trained as a philosopher, was the author of commentaries on logic, and spoke Greek, Syriac and Hebrew.[55] But training in the medical sciences was perhaps the most impressive and useful attribute in diplomacy. The social status of the physician had risen considerably through late antiquity; their heightened position brought with it an increased public profile and responsibilities.[56] Furthermore, the

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[51] M.L. Clark (1971) 37,45, 130. A well-delivered speech could save considerable resources and obtain the same result as a pitched battle or loyal fortress: one good speech is worth a thousand armed men, see G. Mattingly (1965) 58.

[52] Soc., 7.8; Theophanes, 1.132; *Life of Marutha* 23-6, 28-9.

[53] Evagr., 6.12; W.E. Kaegi (1981) 68-71 supports Evagrius' narrative which attributes the quelling of the mutiny to Gregory's spiritual authority and eloquence against Th. Sim., 3.3.11, in which the *procurator* Aristobulus bribes the troops. However, the insurrection was fundamentally a protest against Maurice' tight-fisted fiscal policy, see L.M. Whitby (1988) 18-19.

[54] Evagr., 6.15; there were still those who feared punishment if they surrendered, most notably the local commander Sittas, L.M. Whitby (1988) 299.

[55] *Chron. Seert*, 67 or 68; also N. Garsoïan (1973) 126.

[56] R.C. Blockley (1980) 89-100; N. Nutton (1984) 10-13, but see qualification at 111 n. 12; A. Kazdan (1984) 51.

exchange and study of medical manuals required that doctors were conversant in several languages, and it is not surprising that admirable physicians are found both amongst ecclesiastical and secular delegates.[57] In the early fourth century Nino, the evangelist of the Iberians, cured King Mirian's infant son of an unknown disease.[58] Impressed by her abilities, the king rewarded Nino by providing support for her mission, and receiving an embassy headed by a bishop sent by Constantine. Yezdegerd I was deeply indebted to Marutha of Martyropolis when he combined his medical training and spiritual authority to heal the king's possessed son, and relieve the king himself of persistent headaches.[59] Similarly, Joseph, the Persian *Catholicos* who developed links with communities of Roman captives amongst the Huns beyond the Caucasus passes, was trusted and admired by Kavadh for his skills as a physician.[60]

Finally, an individual cleric's popularity amongst his audience was also desirable. As with pious virtues, most ancient accounts highlight the warm reception an ambassador received from his host. Two notable negative cases, suggest that this characteristic was more than just dutiful praise. Nerses the Great undertook at least one official journey to Constantinople to reconcile his king with Constantius and conclude a defensive pact between the Romans and Armenians.[61] Although he accomplished his mission, his unpopularity in the Arian court resulted in temporary exile and a halt to his diplomatic activities. Similarly, the monk Moses, who resided in the no-man's land beyond Dara and was an acquaintance of the Persian queen, did not accompany Justinian's ambassadors in A.D. 532. The delegation was instead led by Rufinus, a wealthy figure, well-known in the Persian court. However, Moses'

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[57] For a secular example see Zacharias, the personal emissary of the empress Sophia who concluded the treaty of A.D. 574 and assisted in negotiations after the Armenian campaign of A.D. 576-7, M. Syr., 10.9, p. 312 and Men. Prot., 20.1, discussed in L.M. Whitby (1988) 258-9, 267.

[58] The story of Nino's mission amongst the Iberians and her part in encouraging dialogue between Constantinople and the Iberian court is found in Rufinus, *HE*, 10.11, Soc., 1.20, and MX, 2.86.

[59] Soc., 7.8; Theophanes 1.131; *Life of Marutha* 24-25, 27.

[60] Zach. Mit., 12.7.

[61] Faust. Buz., 4.6; MX 3.30; see N. Garsoïan (1969) 148-64 for a discussion of the dating of this mission, *contra* the earlier arguments of N.H. Baynes (1955a).

knowledge of local events and his relationship to the Queen was useful for promoting negotiations.[62]

§ 5. Churches as proto-embassies:

The lack of permanent embassies has been noted as a weakness in ancient diplomacy.[63] Although one certainly would not go so far as to say that the church ran diplomatic offices throughout the ancient world, the network of monasteries and the provisions described in ecclesiastical documents concerning the upkeep of guest houses, indicate that Christian buildings might have fulfilled such a use. Bishops were expected to travel widely, both within their own see and abroad, on occasions such as synods, and instructions were given to ensure that proper facilities were available to such visiting clergy.[64] The use of the church as a place of negotiation may have followed from the principles developed in the privilege of asylum. Essentially, the Christian practice protected those awaiting arbitration so long as they remained within the holy grounds of church buildings.[65] To what extent the Persians recognised this practice is difficult to say, but churches were selected as sites of negotiation. It is arguable that the Persians simply realised the importance Christian buildings had to local communities, and employed churches to gain their attention, to add further insult to Roman capitulation, and to spread Sasanian propaganda.[66] After the siege of A.D. 503, Kavadh concluded a treaty with the *magister militum*, Areobindus, at the Church of St. Sergius in Edessa.[67] During the sack of Antioch, Khusro established his headquarters in the Church of the Virgin, where he met with ambassadors, who are not

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62 Zach. Mit., 9.7.

63 J. Matthews (1989b) 35.

64 See for example *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 3 and 5; and the *Canons* 25-6, and 36 of Marutha of Martyropolis.

65 *Cod. Th.*, 9.45.3-5; W.K. Boyd (1905) 99-100.

66 E.W. Gray (1973) 32.

67 *Chron. Josh.*, 59.

named as clergy, but who are said to have begged for the church's preservation.[68]

§ 6. Ecclesiastical Leaders, Geographical and Military Intelligence:

Frequent diplomatic contact was crucial to the effective maintenance of power and pursuit of war for most advanced states.[69] The power of the Roman state was reliant on the support of subjects to oppose the disloyal and alien. The self-consciousness of frontier communities was largely defined in contrast to those with whom the imperial government contended, and loyalty was determined by the degree of protection and fiscal attention provided. Hence, to hold the frontier cities it was essential that some degree of alertness be maintained against Rome's enemies not only at times of crisis, but during the long periods of peace in between. Christian ambassadors had a distinct advantage in that their spheres of interests spilled over international borders, and they were permitted, if not expected, to travel between empires on church business. Their network of contacts allowed them to transcended geopolitical barriers better than any previous institution in the ancient world: "the frontiers of estrangement are now drawn by faith rather than nationalism."[70] Now let us examine the ways Christianity achieved and utilised such constant contact.

A fundamental problem to any movement along the eastern frontier was the restricted nature of the Romano-Persian border. In efforts to reduce spying, Nisibis was chosen in A.D. 298 as the only city through which official traffic between the empires was to pass; at the beginning of the fifth century Callinicum and Artaxata were added.[71] Furthermore, embassies which wished to address either court were required to herald their arrival at the border and then await permission to move on to the

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[68] Procopius *Wars*, 2.9.14-17. The narration of the church's use as a place of negotiation in Procopius' narrative emphasises the bewilderment of the author with the "painful working of God's providence", see A.M. Cameron (1985) 106, 145, 232.

[69] G. Mattingly (1965) 53-4 ; although F. Millar (1982) 15-20 indicates intelligence was normally not gathered until immediately before military operations.

[70] J. Der Derian (1987) 59.

[71] Peter the Patrician, *Leg ad gen.* 14; *CJ* 4.63.*pr.*; S.N.C. Lieu (1986).

capital.[72] Christian bishops, on the other hand, were obliged to travel widely across the frontier, even though they did impose some regulations on themselves which explained the conditions necessary for taking a journey, and limited the amount of time out of their see.[73]

One of the primary reasons for travel was the support of religious clients. Both the Armenian and imperial churches had early ecclesiastical connections with the Christian communities in Ciscaucasia and Persia. Furthermore, the Armenian church frequently sent delegates to both imperial courts, especially after the A.D. 387 partition. Those Armenian clergy who officially represented their homeland in the Persian court were granted free travel between the two countries. They also enjoyed the right to appeal directly to the court at Ctesiphon, if they thought any injustice had been committed by a Persian viceroy, and furthermore, if such an appeal was made, the clergy could not have a sentence of death passed upon them.[74] Moreover, official envoys were greatly limited in their freedom, being required to stick to strict instructions; unofficial visits by clergy were not, presumably, under such constraints.[75] As a result of such freedoms, it was considerably easier for ecclesiastics to move on all sides of the frontier, bringing them into contact with diverse lands and cultures, and providing a convenient pool of knowledge from which the imperial government could draw. While campaigning in the upper Tigris basin during A.D. 531, the imperial army was accompanied by John, the former hermit of Anastasia and newly elected bishop of Martyropolis. John's familiarity with the Hunnic raiders, may, however, have been more appropriate to this expedition than his knowledge of the area, which would have been superfluous in the company of commanders like

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[72] See for example Lib., *Or.* 12.76 and 18.164 for the difficulties of the Persian embassy which was attempting to dissuade Julian in A.D. 362, discussed by A.D. Lee (1986) 457-8. For the process of approaching the Persian court, see A. Christensen (1944) 414f.

[73] Marutha, *Canons*, 25-6 charge the bishops and his appointed agents with visiting client churches, but 15 and 38 urge the bishop to curb his wandering to official business, and 69 states a bishop should not be outside his see for more than six months unless ill or captured. The Synod of Laodicea, *Canons*, 41-2 bid deacons and priest to always obtain the consent and letters of transit from their bishop before embarking.

[74] Freedom of travel: Elishe, 83 and Procopius, *Wars*, 2.24.7; right of appeal and immunity from capital punishment: Elishe, 123.

[75] B.H. Warmington (1977) 515 and A.D. Lee (1986) 458-59 provide and discuss evidence which describes the limitations imposed on secular embassies.

Sittas.[76] It is also known that some of John's fellow Amidenes had established a mission amongst the Huns. Members of the new community, initially composed of Roman captives led from the vicinity of Amida, had intermarried with the Huns, and spent years translating Christian texts into the native language.[77] In such a case the entire mission could be patronised by an imperial see, and thus provide a permanent community through which Roman interests could be advanced. In other cases, patronage of only the leaders was needed. For instance, Simon, the bishop of Nisibis, who was of great help providing information to the imperial government, and was present in the A.D. 583 negotiations at Amida, was a client of Gregory, bishop of Antioch, who frequently provided material and spiritual help for the Persian bishop.[78]

It was difficult to obtain a high level of secrecy in the ancient world, and laborious preparations and the highly ritualistic nature of warfare limited opportunities for surprise.[79] Rumours of foreign events usually filtered back to Roman and Sasanian agents, and it was a natural duty, if not natural inclination, for merchants to collect information and gossip from across the frontier. Furthermore, as tactical plans were not always drawn up in advance, surprise had been rare in early classical conflicts.[80] As a result of the 'openness' of frontiers and Rome's apparently poor knowledge of geography, it has been observed by scholars that military operations were at best limited in their scope and strategy, and at their worst opportunistic adventures.[81] However, with the travel restrictions imposed between the Persian and Roman empire, it became possible to assemble and manoeuvre a force against the frontier with some degree of secrecy.[82] Consequently diplomacy was a key instrument in either gaining

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76 Zach. Mit., 8.5; 9.6.

77 Zach, Mit., 12.7.

78 Th. Sim., 1.15.11; Evagr., 5.9.

79 D.J. Mosley (1973) 4-6, 8; A.D. Lee (1991a) 257-61.

80 F.E. Adcock (1957) 41, and (1970) 85-6.

81 F. Millar (1982) 15-20; B. Isaac (1990) 401-6.

82 The campaigns of A.D. 359 and 502 both found the Romans, not entirely unaware, but sufficiently off-guard that the attacker was at a distinct advantage.

details of enemy defences for shocking an opponent with massed troops, or delaying, and if possible, deterring enemy aggression.[83]

Christian clergy were quite capable of providing military intelligence, even employing their archives and literary talents to good effect. Apparently the church hierarchy was in the practice of sending information and keeping records of activities across the frontier. The *Catholicos*, Sahak the Great, was viewed as a security risk by the nobles of Persarmenia, and consequently was removed from office.[84] The evidence supporting these accusations is strong: he wrote many letters to important imperial ecclesiastics and military commanders, and was a friend of Anatolius, the *magister militum* at Theodosiopolis, who later attempted to secure him safe passage into Roman territory.[85] Bishop Vr'tanes in a letter to Constantius was able to cite records in his possession concerning the defensive pact between Rome and Armenia.[86] Similarly, Zachariah of Mitylene had access to a letter between two Persian bishops concerning the intrigues of the priest Abraham, an agent of Justin, among the Saracen princes.[87]

The Armenian uprising of A.D. 451 displays the various non-military mechanisms which the church could activate in times of diplomatic crisis. At the beginning of the insurrection, the bishops sent their *chorepiskopoi* into the countryside to inform the populace of what was happening, and make preparations for resistance.[88] A captured *marzpan* placed himself in the custody and at the disposal of the Armenian bishops, providing them with information about the Persian army.[89] The *hazarapet* of Albania came in the company of his bishop to

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83 B. Isaac (1990) 407 concedes that by the fifth century, the Roman empire had begun to collect intelligence in an orderly fashion; see G. Mattingly (1965) 57-8 on the crucial nature of diplomacy as preparation to conflict; on the role of embassies in stalling or dissuading invasions, see evidence and discussion in A.D. Lee (1986) 456-8.

84 MX 3.66.

85 For letters see especially those in MX 3.57; for friendship with Anatolius MX 3.57 and 65.

86 MX 3.4-5; see also letter in Faust. Buz., 3.21. Both refer to the military agreements between Tr'dat and Constantine, see Agathangelos, 877.

87 Zach. Mit., 8.3.

88 Elishe, 57; Marutha, *Canons*, 25-6, indicate that a system for such dissemination was normally present for each see.

89 Elishe, 66.

provide the rebels with information on Persian movements from the north; both were sent back to delay the Persian army with disinformation.[90]

Nor was this rebellion the only occasion when clergy provided military intelligence. Through the brother of the bishop of Dwin, Gregory, *Catholicos* of Armenia, the general Valerian learned of the weakened state of the Persians' defences and opportunities open for a Roman assault against Persarmenia.[91] Likewise, Justin II obtained important information about Persarmenian affairs through the ecclesiastical delegations sent by Vardan between A.D 569 and 572, but even after an insurrection began in Persarmenia, the emperor took no active steps to pursue an offensive.[92] During the Mesopotamian campaign of A.D. 573, information on the progress of the siege of Nisibis was tardy, perhaps even withheld by the exasperated Roman general, Marcian, a relative of the emperor. An accurate briefing was provided by news which the Nisibene bishop had secretly conveyed to Gregory, bishop of Antioch. The Nisibene bishop was a client of Gregory, having received costly gifts and assistance in the protection of his Christian community. On several occasions this bishop had sent information concerning military matters to Gregory. A final communiqué indicated Persian forces were massing for a counter-attack against the Roman siege. This news was swiftly dispatched to Constantinople. But Justin II, eager to capture Nisibis, and unimpressed with Marcian's actions in the area, had already sent a more aggressive commander, who lost the support of his troops, and the siege broke off.[93] Several years later Gregory obtained the confidence of the emperor Maurice who sent him to negotiate with rebellious troops, and report on the unsuccessful Roman efforts at retaking Martyropolis.[94] By the end of the sixth century tables could be turned on the Romans, as when Hormizd obtained from Mar Isho-Yabh, the Nestorian bishop of Chlomaron,

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90 Elishe, 70-2.

91 Procopius, *Wars*, 2.24.8-11; Zach. Mit., 12.7 for the identification of the bishop.

92 Evagr., 5.7.

93 Evagr., 5.8-9; see also J. Eph., *HE*, 6.2. L.M. Whitby (1988) 256-7 doubts that the information provided by Gregory influenced Marcian's dismissal, but this does not deny the church's role in providing intelligence.

94 Evagr., 6.11-14; Th. Sim., 3.5.10.

strategic information concerning the movements of the imperial army in Arzanene.[95]

The blending of religious and secular evangelisation was an old practice in the ancient world, where an integral duty of every Roman embassy was to spread the imperial cult and hence sanctification of the Roman state on a local level throughout the empire.[96] A notable feature of Christian diplomacy was that ecclesiastical leaders perceived it as their duty to establish order by 'mediating' between 'alien cultures'.[97] Furthermore, the process of conversion often left the missionary host people with feelings not only of religious, but also of political allegiance and dependency; it was in the interest of the state to encourage the continued evangelisation of regions along and beyond the frontier.[98] One could say that the disputes in Armenia were often aggravated by the success of Christian missionaries, who were trained and provided with resources by the imperial church and government.[99] Missions established a network of contacts through which the fused Christian and imperial symbols were transmitted; and just as the converted became the clients of missionary churches, so too the missionary church relied on the patronage of imperial institutions.[100] In Iberia, Nino was in close contact with the Armenian bishops and had the support of the Georgian princes amongst whom her early evangelisation was targeted.[101] These missions spread throughout the region and converted the tribes guarding the Caucasian passes.[102] Missionaries convinced their secular princes of the importance of sending embassies to seek imperial assistance in establishing the new religion. The Iberian king dispatched an embassy to obtain priests and

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95 Men. Prot., 23.7; *Chron. Seert*, 2.94

96 D.S. Hill (1905) 18-19; S.R.F. Price (1984) 247-8.

97 J. Der Derian (1987) 61.

98 Compare the successful joint action of the French government and the Jesuits along the Ohio and north-west frontier in eighteenth-century America and the problems this caused for English expansion, discussed in W.R. Jacobs (1950) 31-34.

99 Certainly Christian support of missions in Persia and amongst the Saracens aggravated relations between the two great powers, see Z. Rubin (1986a) 34 and (1986b) 679-81; L.M. Whitby (1988) 215, 252-3.

100 Both Rome and Persia attempted to consolidate their control over Ciscaucasia through missions, see L.M. Whitby (1988) 215-18; and J. Kramer (1935/7) 613-18.

101 MX 2.86; Soc., 1.20; Rufinus, 10.11; Toumanoff (1963) 374-7.

102 Agathangelos, 842-3; MX 2.86.

religious instructors for his kingdom.[103] This was necessary because the mission churches were under the jurisdiction of imperial sees, and did not have the mechanism or right to ordain their own pastors.

Missions proved a useful base for military and political operations. An imperial embassy sent to recruit amongst the Huns was keen to establish contact with a Christian mission there. When Justinian's ambassadors informed the emperor that former captives and Armenian clergy had begun evangelising the Huns, and were translating books into the Hunnish language, the emperor sent a mule-train of ecclesiastical gifts to support their endeavours and bolster the mission. Kavadh had this mission brought to his attention by the Armenian *Catholicos*, who, by the sixth century, had a position alongside the Magi as a religious adviser. Kavadh sent funds and staff to build a hospital, along with one-hundred mules and fifty camels laden with goods.[104]

§ 7. The Spiritual Authority of Ecclesiastical Diplomats:

Continued negotiations through ecclesiastics became essential as the relationship between patron and client was Christianized. The clients of king Tr'dat requested that if he wish "to rule those lands in the true way according to this faith, send them bishops", after which they received the embassy and presumably missionary efforts of bishop Grigoris, grandson of Gregory the Illuminator.[105] When a series of rebellions broke out in Armenia with the death of king Tr'dat, Archbishop Vrt'anes initiated negotiations with the emperor Constantius. In his letter Vrt'anes reminds Constantius of the sacred covenant established by Constantine between the two Christian nations and of the military obligations which the Romans should heed as a Christian superpower:

"Remember the sworn covenant of your father Constantine with our king Tr'dat and do not give this country over to the godless Persians, but help us with an army to make Khusro, Tr'dat's son, king. For God has made you lord not only of Europe but also of all of the

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103 Theodoret, *HE*, 1.24.

104 Zach. Mit., 12.7; see also Procopius, *Wars*, 1.12.i6-19 for Justin's efforts. On the importance of recruiting amongst the Huns see A. Vasilev (1950) 313-17.

105 Faust. Buz., 3.5; MX 3.3.

Mediterranean, and the awe of your power has reached the ends of the earth. And we desire that you rule over an ever-greater empire. Be well."[106]

In response to Vrt'anes' entreaties Constantius sent a force under the *praefectus*, Antiochus, to crown Khusro and suppress rebellion. In the middle of the fourth century, when interminable war with Persia and growing rebellion threatened to weaken permanently Armenia against eastern and western imperialism, the nobility again turned to Archbishop Nerses to preside over unilateral peace negotiations.[107] After the majority of the nobility resumed their royal support, Nerses was dispatched to an invading Roman army. He brought with him numerous hostages. He was conducted to Constantinople, where his orthodox faith met with Arian disapproval; the Armenian nobles and hostages returned in peace, but Nerses was exiled.[108] With the death of the emperor, Nerses and other exiled bishops returned to their homes.[109] Later, when Valentinian ordered a punitive campaign against the Armenians for their neglect in providing troops, Nerses the Great was sent to meet and dissuade the Roman general from attacking. He was sent by the Romans to Constantinople where he delivered the Armenian tribute and additional gifts, and solidified the peace by orchestrating the marriage between the noblewoman Olympias and king Arshak.[110] Bishops had become the delegates mediating between client kings and their patrons.

Ecclesiastical ambassadors were recognised as having spiritual authority which could be used to pressure civil and military leaders. When in A.D. 451 a Persian *marzpan* surrendered his force to a victorious rebel detachment, he negotiated through the Armenian bishop, whom he hoped would be able to convince the Armenian commanders to be lenient in their punishment.[111] Joseph, presiding Armenian bishop during the

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[106] MX 3.4-5; compare letter to unknown emperor in Faust. Buz., 3.21. For the perception of the Roman emperor as patron of a universal Christian community see Constantine's letter to Sapor and Theodoret's commentary at *HE*, 1.25.

[107] Faust. Buz., 4.51; MX 3.29.

[108] Faust. Buz., 4.5; MX 3.19-30. Concerning this second mission both N.H. Baynes (1955a) 187, and N. Garsoïan (1969) maintain that the emperor "Valens" is confused with "Constantius", both accept the events as factual, but differ on the dating.

[109] Soc., 5.2; Faust. Buz 4.13; MX 3.33.

[110] MX 3.21; Amm. Marc., 20.11.1-3

[111] Elishe, 66.

rebellion, issued a letter to the emperor Theodosius, stating that the Armenians were old clients of Rome and fellow Christians, and were now in need of, and entitled to, military assistance.[112] Persia likewise made use of clerical embassies in ruling their clients. Through an Armenian priest loyal to Persian suzerainty Persarmenian generals negotiated with the rebels; their presence, in spite of Elishe's protestations that they were "false priests" indicated that such an embassy was official and trustworthy.[113] But at times, even though the church hierarchy might facilitate dialogue between opposing camps, they could not guarantee that talks would not break down amidst accusations of mistrust and endanger client-patron relations, as was the case when bishops Joseph and Lewond parleyed with Vasak, a noble Persian loyalist, but were unable to bring either side to agreement.[114]

Both the Romans and Persians attempted to score diplomatic victories either by applying spiritual leverage or spreading Christian propaganda. The monk Moses who dwelt a short distance from Dara supposedly met and cured the wife of Kavadh, who was sympathetic to Christianity. This friendship was helpful in putting pressure on the Persians when in A.D. 532 Justinian was negotiating peace with the young Khusro.[115] The Persian general of Persarmenia dispatched Gregory, bishop of Dwin, to try to obtain an immediate peace after his troops were crippled by a pestilence. The bishop was chosen to put moral pressure on the Romans for peace and to chide them for their delays in coming to negotiations, but to ensure their embassy safe conduct through Persia.[116] Khusro I perceived the weight a holy man could lend to an embassy, when he sent Sebukt to the imperial court, hoping that the Romans might find convincing, or familiar, the argument that fellow Christians should refrain from waging war against one another.[117] It is possible that Khusro

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112 Elishe, 71.

113 Elishe, 106.

114 Elishe, 122-3.

115 Zach. Mit. 9.6-7.

116 Procopius, 2.24.6-7; see Elishe, 83 on this privilege. Procopius asserts the bishop of Dwin was the *Catholicos*, 2.25.4, this is confirmed in Zach. Mit., 12.7.

117 Men. Prot., 16.1, a reversal of the logic used by the Romans in the Red Sea and amongst the Arabs, L.M. Whitby (1988) 251-2.

II obtained the emperor Maurice's attention *via* ecclesiastical assistance. Certainly he took every advantage to publicise his alleged conversion, and it was only after his turning toward Christianity that the Persian obtained an audience.[118] In his flight he had invited Mar Isho-Yabh, the former bishop of Chlomaron and now *Catholicos*, to join him, and aimed to tempt Maurice with the prospect of resolving the Nestorian split with the imperial church.[119] Bishop Isho-Yabh had been earlier sent by the Persian commander besieged at Clomaron "in the belief that the leaders of Christ's priests would gain the respect of the Romans since they were Christians" and that the Romans assaulting the city would not allow fellow Christians to die needlessly.[120] The imperial government was also capable of making its own profit from Khurso's adoption of Christian diplomacy. At the Roman siege of Martyropolis, bishop Domitian, in addition to negotiating with the inhabitants, rebuked Khusro for being unfaithful to his Roman benefactors.[121] After Khusro was restored, Maurice continued the game, sending a Chalcedonian bishop as ambassador to the Persian court to help supervise the 'Christian' Khusro in matters of the faith.[122]

§ 8. Conclusion:

In conclusion, local church leaders provided certain handy mechanisms for pursuing political goals. By the fourth century bishops were widely recognised as trustworthy judges, and the laws and institutions of the church provided a skeleton framework for overseas operations. One should not be overly cynical about this. There is little doubt that the imperial government believed in its mission to act as patron over the scattered Christian communities, but this earnestness does not change the fact that the church became a vehicle for promoting and safeguarding imperial ambitions. There is a certain irony in that as the church became more involved in shaping imperial diplomacy, it lost the

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118 Evagr, 6.17; Th. Sim., 4.10.4.

119 Anon. Guidi, 2; L.M. Whitby (1988) 295 and 297 n. 31.

120 Men. Prot., 23.7.

121 Th. Sim., 4.15.8-16.

122 Th. Sim., 5.15.8 where the bishop is named Probus; also *Chron. Seert* 67 - 68, where he is named as Marutha. Dated by Whitby (1988) at 241 to A.D. 596 or later.

initial credibility which had won it a privileged position as an honest negotiator amongst rival parties. Along the frontier ecclesiastical figures became difficult to distinguish from civil. As the church garnered more land and greater privileges, elite families concommitantly merged religious and secular interests; such was clearly the case throughout Armenia, where princely and secular estates were mixed evenly throughout the country and noble families supplied both political and spiritual leaders.[123] Armenian clergy had proved influential in convincing military commanders that their rebellion was a necessary and spiritual struggle,[124] but this action was largely in reaction to Persian intolerance. However, by the end of the sixth century, the church hierarchy appears to be instigating imperial aggression. The clergy were instrumental in the A.D. 572 negotiations with the Persarmenians. Religious grievances inspired the Armenians to send a delegation to Justin II. Certainly when Khusro had discovered that the emperor had obtained pledges from the Armenians to rebel against their Persian governors, Justin replied that it was impossible to stand in the way of religious determination.[125] Imperial and orthodox Christian ambitions were nearly indivisible, and as the imperial government became more confrontational, so did the church.[126] When Khusro received military assistance from Maurice, Bishops Gregory and Domitianus were sent to oversee diplomatic transactions and keep an eye on the situation.[127] Both bishops were highly trusted by the emperor, Domitianus as a kinsman, and Gregory as a loyal friend familiar with the military transactions of the frontier. When the pious emperor Maurice arrested Mar Isho-Yabh, a conservative move can be detected. The emperor viewed the Nestorian bishop as acting in an abnormal manner. When the interests of the two, civil and ecclesiastical authority, merged, the clergy began to forfeit their role as mediators. But action such as Maurice's highlights the fact that as

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123 On the general fusion of church and state interests see J. Der Derian (1987) 70; on Armenia in particular see N. Adontz (1970) 100.

124 Elishe, 99.

125 Evagr., 5.7.

126 R.C. Blockley (1985) 73-4 , and L.M. Whitby (1988) 250-1, 276 on Justin II and Maurice's return toward an aggressive foreign policy.

127 Evagr., 6.18; Th. Sim., 4.14.5-6; L.M. Whitby (1988) 299.

local intermediaries bishops could only be effective if they were perceived as maintaining a high degree of *honestas*.

Frontier Policy

§ 1. Introduction:

Two recent studies in particular have provoked discussion concerning the development of a theory of frontier mechanics: E.N. Luttwak's *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* and B. Isaac's *The Limits of Empire.* Any attempt to outline, even in general terms, the mechanics of Roman foreign policy along the North-East frontier must respond to their arguments. To begin, it is necessary to make a few general statements about these two works before moving on to examine our section of the frontier. More attention will be given to Isaac as his study is specifically concerned with the Roman east. However, as much of Isaac is a reaction to Luttwak, we must first examine pertinent elements of Luttwak's thesis.

§ 2. Luttwak's Thesis and Isaac's Response:

Luttwak undertakes a general study of the Roman frontier from the time of Augustus to the end of the third century, with some discussion of fourth-century developments. In brief, his observations are as follows. Roman strategic planning passed through three phases.[1] The first phase, effective under the Julio-Claudians, involved keeping troops in central locations as a mobile strike force, either against the final stages of rebellion within provinces or to support client kings who undertook the bulk of frontier security. Under this system, the emperors could exert their authority without expending a large degree of force. Client states, foreign tribes, and imperial opponents such as Parthia, viewed the total reserves available to Rome as immense, and were usually deterred from aggression. The creation of such an image was only possible because Roman forces were not spread out along the frontiers. From the Flavians to the Severi, a "scientific frontier" was developed wherein the Roman Army defended a defined frontier against external threats, relying less on clients. Where possible, natural boundaries were sought and efforts were

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[1] E.N. Luttwak (1976) 7-50; 51-126; and 127-190, respectively.

made to delineate where Roman control began and ended: the "disposable" military power of large garrisons and allied client kingdoms was exchanged for direct control. The final phase is a reaction to the invasions of the third century. Small military sites were spread along the communications network of the empire to stall invaders until a now separate field army could eventually confront the threat.

Isaac's objections to Luttwak, and an overview of his own ideas on the subject were heralded by his article 'Luttwak's "Grand Strategy" and the Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire', which appeared a year before *Limits* was published. In this critique he indicated that theories of a unified frontier strategy relied on a number of specific assumptions, but attacked one in particular. The greatest pillar of any 'grand strategy' theory is that the imperial government must be motivated by a concern for "maintenance of order in the frontier zone".[2] This "maintenance of order" for Isaac means developing civic life so as to win the goodwill of provincials. Isaac contends that such activities were not undertaken by the Roman emperors who, instead, depended on military coercion, rather than their subjects' loyalty. The purpose of Roman garrisons in the East was largely twofold: first, to crush all resistance to Roman rule in subject territories, and second, to stand ready for future campaigns against oriental kingdoms. Isaac is sceptical about attributing to Roman planners a high degree of rationality, contending that military activity was influenced less by a desire to construct a secure frontier than by an impulse to acquire attractive lands. This chapter will instead suggest that a "secure" frontier was an objective of the imperial government, and that the state relied heavily on local agents to achieve this security.

A central problem in Isaac's work is that despite *Limits'* claim to encompass the entire eastern frontier, the evidence is largely drawn from Judaea and Palestina.[3] Isaac states that it is his intention to analyse the entire East: "It is an attempt to clarify various aspects of Roman aims in the East, from the Caucasus to Sinai" and "The book attempts to trace the limits of Roman physical involvement in the eastern frontier provinces, from their acquisition at the end of the republic age till the Islamic

2 See esp. B. Isaac (1989) 233 and (1990) concluding statements 424-26.

3 Isaac's "Jewish perspective" is noted, but not quantified, by A.R. Birley (1991) 412.

conquest."[4] To note exhaustively how sites in or near modern Israel receive the lion's share of attention would require considerable space. There are a few simple methods, however, which may be used to highlight the skewed nature of the work's evidence. By turning to the indices and calculating the number of entries and pages under geographical or provincial areas, one can gain a rough overview of the book's contents. Judaea and Palestina have between them twenty-two entries and seventy-one pages cited.[5] If one adds the entries and pages cited for Arabia, Armenia, Cappadocia, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Syria in the same fashion, twenty-three entries and sixty-four pages are cited. Following the same general procedure for the eastern legions, the three units associated with the area surrounding Judaea, *legiones III, VI, X* are given twenty-three pages of citations. While the remaining twelve legions which saw service in the East are accorded twenty-nine pages. Effectively three times the attention is devoted to troops associated with one particular part of the eastern frontier. The same can be said of cities, where Jerusalem is granted nine entries, Caesarea three, Berytus two, while Amida receives two, and Nisibis, Martyropolis, and Melitene one each.[6] This does not detract from the merit of Isaac's analysis of Judaea, or even southern Syria and Arabia, but in a study which purports to cover the entire eastern frontier, the author's judgements may have been overly influenced by one area, which is arguably very different from others, and clearly far removed from the borders with Persia and Ciscaucasia. Therefore it will be helpful to test some of Isaac's ideas on the north-east in greater detail.[7]

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4 B. Isaac (1990) 4 and 419.

5 These statistics include the entry "Jews" which Isaac refers the reader to under "Judaea". For the purpose of quick calculations I have not counted all the pages listed with a "f." or "and following" symbol. For example, "Herodian building enterprises in 340f." is counted as one entry and one page of citation, even though the actual total amount of pages would be far greater.

6 The difference in page numbers is even greater, but difficult to calculate since most pages cited under Jerusalem entries have an "f" attached.

7 To avoid confusion it should be noted that Isaac's work and this thesis do not share the same definition of "North-East". B. Isaac (1990) 43-50 defines the area as Caucasus, and does not include Armenia or northern Mesopotamia.

§ 3. Soldier and Civilian on the North-East Frontier:

Isaac depicts the Roman army, and by association the imperial government in the East as one which "spent no time on certain activities which modern states consider elementary duties towards their citizens", and that "in the eastern provinces at least, the subjects of the provinces were considered irrelevant".[8] However, if we examine how the Roman army treated the civilian population of the north-east frontier, and, where possible, how the subject and non-Roman population viewed the Roman state, a less negative picture may be formed. The defence of the frontier depended on either the obedience or the loyalty of local communities. Isaac has emphasised the coercive nature of the Roman state. The remainder of this chapter will attempt to balance the picture by highlighting the interest shown for provincials by the imperial government and its agents. First, I will argue that the presence of the Roman army brought certain benefits to urban and rural areas, and that the attitude of army and civilian toward one another, was co-operative. Second, in re-examining the frontier cities, I will argue that the imperial government aimed to establish a secure environment, and thus intentionally cultivated the loyalty of frontier communities in ways usually best suited to each locality. Finally, I will argue that the imperial government's dependence on local leaders and local communities attests a unified policy similar to Luttwak's suggested 'grand strategy'.

The presence of a military force undoubtedly caused problems for both large and small communities. As Isaac points out, taxation, billeting, occasional looting and brutality made for poor relations between army and subjects.[9] Without overturning these conclusions, I would like to present evidence which indicates that the presence of the imperial army was also beneficial to frontier communities in offering recognised centres which provided technical assistance and military employment.

Perhaps more than any other peace-time benefit of the army's presence, local communities profited from imperial egineers. Evidence of

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8 B. Isaac (1990) 158 and 305

9 B. Isaac (1990) 268-310. The present chapter adheres to the "mixed blessing" stance of R. MacMullen (1963) 77-98.

military construction in the large urban centres was discussed in chapter two, and shall be returned to briefly later on. But the army was also responsible for civilian works in the smaller settlements and the country. Although field work along the north-east frontier is in its early stages and material evidence is still being sought, examples do exist from adjacent provinces that illustrate the point.[10] A Greek inscription from Batnae describes how when the *praefectus* of Osrhoene was making repairs to the city wall, he added shelter to provide citizens with some shade.[11] In minor Syrian villages sentiments of gratitude are expressed on a stone, one from the late third century and one for Justinian.[12] A road network improved with well and shelters by a local military commander was praised by a wayfarer in Syria.[13] Our literary evidence for the north-east displays an obvious bias toward ecclesiastical building, but supports the view that the army was involved in civilian building projects. Reflecting the activities of the Roman army, client troops were employed to advance the interests of pro-Roman allies in Armenia. In the early fourth century, soldiers dismantled fire temples in the countryside and helped in the construction of churches. Such action illustrates the methods used by pro-Roman and pro-Persian factions in Armenia. Ultimately, the Persians failed to promote the Zoroastrian religion through building schemes.[14] Imperial and local craftsmen were lent to nearby monasteries and villages in the Tur 'Abdin during the construction of Dara.[15] In the fifth century three churches were built in the vicinity of Martyropolis under the guidance of Roman officers. Although non-military buildings, it is clear that such churches could never be disassociated from imperial power and

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10 E.W. Gray (1973) 29 and J. Crow (1986) 87 on the difficulties of collecting archaeological data in this region.

11 H. Petersen (1977) 267.

12 *IGR* III 1186, M.H. Dodgeon and S.N.C. Lieu (1990) 5.1.4, a Greek inscription wishing the emperor Probus victory. *IGLS* 4.1809 to "our most pious and beloved emperor", cited in Whitby (1986a) 723.

13 *CIL* III 6660, M.H. Dodgeon and S.N.C. Lieu (1990) 5.6.1, dated to the late third or early fourth century.

14 Agathangelos, 811-2. This is only the beginning of a long history of attempts by Roman and Persian powers to sway the civilian populace by non-military construction. See E.W. Gray (1973) 32; G. Fowden (1970) 56-7 and 77-8; and Chp. 3 § 4 above.

15 Zach. Mit., 7.6; E.J.W. Hawkins and M.C. Mundell (1973) 279-96; A. Palmer (1990) 123.

were the object of Persian injury in the late sixth century.[16] This helpful action agrees with what is known about the non-military duties of the Roman army throughout most of the empire.[17]

The late Roman State became increasingly dependent on Anatolia and Armenia as populous recruiting zones.[18] The local frontier cities benefited the imperial government in attracting men to the ranks, and benefited themselves from the contributions these individuals and their fellow foreign conscripts within the community made. Recruiting from the local communities in the north-east is attested early. Shortly after its arrival at Satala, the *legio XV Apollinaris* began recruiting from the native population.[19] The same would have held true for other garrisons along the north-east frontier, and by the late third century, the families of the soldiers were expected to provide conscripts.[20] Manpower shortages, compounded by the need to keep peasants on the land, increasingly encouraged the imperial government to recruit men for the field army from outside Roman settlements where cash would be accepted instead.[21] Nonetheless, recruiting was still organised on a very local level. Settlements close to the frontier were a natural centre to which foreign volunteers gravitated. Large numbers, for example, were drawn from the Transtigritane satrapies and formed the *sagittarii Zabdiceni* , recruited and stationed at Bezabde. Even after the satrapies were lost, service in the Roman army may have remained an option for Transtigritane locals. Several units from the region are attested: the *cohors quartadecima Valeria Zabdenorum,* the *ala quintadecima Flavia Carduenorum,* and the *equites sagittarii Cordueni,* who served in the west,[22] although it is possible these are redundancies. Moreover, the frontier communities offered a recognisable locus for negotiations between the Roman

16 *EI* (2) 929. for example, in A.D. 585 Persian troops burnt down the convent of the prophet John outside Martyropolis, Th. Sim., 1.14.7.

17 R.W. Davies (1974) 321-331; R. MacMullen (1963) chps. 2 and 3 esp..

18 J.L. Teall (1965) 312; E.W. Gray (1973) 37; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (1990) 11-25; P. Charanis (1963) 12-28.

19 T.B. Mitford (1974a) 164.

20 A.H.M. Jones (1964) 614-619.

21 A.H.M. Jones, ibid; J. Matthews (1989a) 281.

22 *Not. Dig., Or.* 36.36 and 34, *Occ.* 6.40.83; see E. Winter (1989) 560.

authorities and high-ranking locals.[23] When Narses and Aratius deserted to Belisarius, their youngest brother Isaac and his entourage presented themselves to Roman officials and fellow Persarmenians at Theodosiopolis.[24] Like some barbarian volunteers, the *limitanei* and the city militia were largely drawn from the frontier population and organised around regional bases. Even if the *limitanei* were capable of joining the imperial field army on campaign, they normally remained in fixed areas and were part of a regional community.[25] The *limitanei*, whose wealth exceeded local standards, made tangible contributions to the rural communities. Along the Romano-Persian border, near Cephas, they provided money for nearby monasteries, and even founded villages of their own.[26] Hence we see that the drawing of resources away from the communities was only one side of the relationship between subjects and imperial agents. It must be remembered that resources were injected back into the frontier.

Whether the Roman army had a high regard for the average Roman subject is difficult to determine. Isaac presents evidence which indicates that the army often abused their power over those peasants working the land and those in settlements.[27] But there is also evidence indicating that some concern was shown for the emperor's subjects by both the officers and the rank and file. During the siege of Amida, the Gallic legionaries, uninfluenced by local ties, were outraged when the Roman captives from Ziata were paraded before the wall.[28] This reaction cannot be viewed as unique, for the Persians intended the ceremony of marching the captives before the walls for a specific effect. Had the army been without regard for the civilians, a more callous response would have been

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23 Although according to Amm. Marc., 19.9.2, Sapor apprehended and executed the Transtigritane recruits.

24 Procopius, *Wars*, 1.15.31-2; J.L. Teall (1965) 298.

25 A.H.M. Jones, (1964) 651. Despite the impression Isaac (1990) 208-211 gives that the *limitanei* were regular soldiers, little different from the *comitatenses*, two of his main sources, Mal., 18.16 and Procopius, *Wars*, 2.16.17-19 indicate that the *limitanei* initially responded to a local security problem, and that fighting away from their homes was something extraordinary.

26 Source and discussion of fifth-century examples in A.N. Palmer (1990) 54-5.

27 See for example B. Isaac (1990) 282-9, 297-8, which relies heavily on Talmudic evidence.

28 Amm. Marc., 19.6.1-4; J. Matthews (1989) 61.

expected. Ammianus' own regret emerges in his description of how elderly and feeble captives were hamstrung if they could not keep pace with the slave column. He could not have witnessed this event at the time, but it was incorporated later into his narrative for a certain emotive effect.[29] If we accept Ammianus' opinion as an accurate reflection of the officer class from which the emperors themselves were drawn,[30] then we may believe that his sentiments towards Roman subjects were not unusual within the imperial government. This is far from saying that the army consistently felt warmth towards Roman subjects. Nonetheless, as garrisons became little more than a skeleton of their former selves, efficient defence was reliant on not simply acquiescence from Roman subjects, but their full-hearted support. There was occasional friction. In the A.D. 540 sack of Antioch, a group of soldiers were the first to rush out of the city gates, trampling citizens underneath.[31] But again, the narrative of this siege brings out two important points: first, when the citizens, the local defenders of Antioch, are finally reinforced by six thousand imperial troops, they are brave in their actions. It is the troops hastily dispatched by Justinian and the emergency force rushed up from Lebanon who act inappropriately. Second, Procopius himself is disgusted by their abnormal behaviour.[32] In his *historia*, Procopius rarely doubts the loyalty of the local militia and *limitanei*. The defenders of a city like Martyropolis fought manfully, despite weaknesses in the fortifications and the tardiness of the field army.[33] Loyal subjects might even take it upon themselves to hide Roman troops from the Persians if the situation offered no hope.[34]

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29 The siege of Amida is at the same time one of the most personal and conventional, J. Matthews (1989) 288. It was a literary convention to describe the fate of a sacked city's populace in heart-rending terms; see K. Bradley (1992) 130-32, although evidence for this *topos* is derived from descriptions of barbarian captives.

30 F. Millar (1982) 3. Ammianus' intended audience was probably the imperial court, see J. Matthews (1989a) 8 and 446.

31 Procopius, *Wars*, 2.8.17-19.

32 A. Cameron (1985) 145; 14-5, although I disagree with Cameron's interpretation that Procopius is surprised by the resistance offered by the Antiochenes after the imperial army fled.

33 Procopius, *Wars*, 1.20.6-7.

Clearly, despite the occasional abuse, normal relations between soldiers and subjects were more co-operative than coercive.

If we turn to the civilian view of the army, this symbiotic relationship is reiterated. Given the fact that literary evidence is virtually non-existent for the majority of Roman subjects, we must accept that writings produced by non-military elites can be used to detect the tone of a broader base of the population. One could argue that the high-handed manner with which Julian treated Nisibis before his Persian campaign, and the city's abandonment by Jovian, point to an imperial disregard for subjects. But the case of Nisibis illustrates what civilians thought about their community's place in the empire. After the city's surrender, Ephrem the Syrian lambasted the dead Julian. Under a good Christian emperor the city had stood firm and would never have fallen had it not been for Julian's excesses: "The king by his sackcloth had preserved it, the tyrant by his paganism debased the victory of the city which prayer had crowned with triumph."[35] Ephrem felt that the emperors' duty, previously upheld by Constantine and Constantius, lay in protecting Roman subjects and fighting defensive wars: "to shepherd Mankind, care for the cities, and drive away wild animals".[36] Nisibis was viewed not as a city pressed into defending the power of far-away emperors, but as an essential component of the whole empire: "The city was the capital of the country of Mesopotamia... the city was the capital of the whole West."[37] Nor were provincials the only ones appalled by the army's behaviour. John Chrysostom states that for its own safety the army was willing to trade a city which "had acted as an unbreachable circuit wall to our empire.... the inhabitants of the city were treated with hostility by those from whom they would expect to receive favour... for, like a bulwark, they had always put themselves forward on behalf of everyone else in the face of all dangers."[38] It was the expectation of local communities that they would

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34 Procopius, *Wars*, 2.12.1-2. Chalcis is beyond the geographical bounds of this study, but illustrates not only the relationship between garrison and civilian, but what a Roman officer, like Procopius, believes is proper behaviour.

35 Ephrem, *Hymns*, 2.19.

36 Ephrem, *Hymns*, 1.1.; S.H. Griffith (1987) 252.

37 Ephrem, *Hymns*, 2.25, 80-1; S.H. Griffith (1987) 252-4.

38 John Chrysostom, *de s. Babyla*, 22, 124.

faithfully defend their territories and the imperial government should never abandon them. When abuses did occur they elicited such comments.

§ 4. The Creation of a Secure Frontier:

The defence of the North-East ultimately hinged on the possession of large fortress-cities, but the imperial government still made continuous efforts to fortify medium-sized settlements and rural sites.[39] Amida, itself an initially small site, and lesser settlements near the Transtigritane satrapies were designed by Constantius as refuges for the surrounding area in response to Persian raids.[40] Even insignificant country settlements were fortified, although it was unimaginable that they could be expected to resist a concerted siege, regardless of the amount of imperial investment.[41] When Justinian was improving the defences of the upper Euphrates, not only did he attend to fortress-cities like Theodosiopolis, and smaller settlements like Bizana, but also to refuges in the countryside.[42] These rural forts may have been similar to those identified along the Arsanias valley and around Amida.[43]

That such fortified points were built only to control strategic points is unlikely. Jacob the Recluse corroborates Ammianus' claim that the forts were designed as shelters for Roman subjects. Regarding the upper Euphrates defences, Procopius states clearly that money was given directly to the inhabitants and that they were responsible for the construction. He is more explicit on the subject of the strongholds created in the Tur 'Abdin:

"there are numerous villages along the foot-hills of the mountain, inhabited by people who are indeed happy in their possession of the necessities of life, but would be easy to capture if anyone should attack them. This situation the emperor Justinian corrected for them by building a fort on the very tip of the mountain, so that they might store their most valuable

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39 Contra B. Isaac (1990) 254.

40 Amm. Marc., 18.9.1, and *The History of Jacob the Recluse*, 7.1-13.

41 See for example the fortified villages of Reman and Busan from Constantius' reign, Amm. Marc., 18.10-1-4.

42 Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.4.8-9.

43 J. Howard-Johnston (1989) 223; Procopius, *Buildings*, 2.4.19.

property there and also fleeing thither, save themselves whenever the enemy should come against them."[44]

Furthermore, late Roman forts such as Rabat Kalesı, Zerzevan, Semreh Kalesı, whose ancient names are not known, are filled with the remains of considerable civilian occupation: a warren of homes, storage pits, cisterns, granaries, chapels, and at Zerzevan a stone cut channel for bringing in additional water.[45] There can be no doubt as to the strategic location of the latter two; Semreh Kalesı overlooks the Nymphius approximately twenty kilometres upstream from the remains of a Byzantine bridge, and Zerzevan monitors the road running north from Mardin to Amida. However, civilians appear to have occupied a large portion of the sites' interiors. These forts clearly depended on the support of the local population, whereas if insurrection were a problem, the local population would not have been so intermixed with the military. Such fortified settlements were responsible for defending their individual regions, including strategic points such as roads, bridges, and passes, but also provided shelter for Roman subjects, who, after all, endured the brunt of a siege or filled the ranks of the local militia and *limitanei*.

The mention of Persian and Hun raiders in certain sources which describe the north-east frontier has promoted the interpretation that the Romans were incapable of providing security for the rural villages.[46] Yet the widespread presence of monastic communities throughout the upper Tigris basin from the fourth century on casts doubt as to how ineffective Roman protection of the countryside was.[47] Furthermore, it was in the interest of both the Roman and Armenian clergy to ensure efforts were

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44 Procopius, *Buildings*, 2.4.17-18.

45 In June of 1991 I visited these sites with C.S. Lightfoot and D. French. What A. Cameron (1985) 94 perceives as "stock attributes of a late antique city" in Procopius' descriptions, are so because they were some of the normal facilities provided. B. Isaac (1990) 256 claims, on the other hand, "very few genuine Roman forts have been found".

46 Most recently S.A. Harvey (1990) 61, 65-6. B. Isaac (1990) 68-100, largely examining Syria, Judaea, and Arabia, does not believe banditry or nomad raids seriously threatened Roman rule, but contends that the imperial government did not take significant steps to ensure the safety of the provinces, especially in the countryside.

47 A. Vööbus (1960) 321-7; see above chp. 2 § 2.

made to protect their rural holdings.[48] Emperors had solidified the interests of the countryside and the city in granting estates and whole villages to the urban-based church. Likewise, the Armenian hierarchy was indistinguishable from the secular aristocracy in anchoring its power in feudal domains throughout Armenia. Even if one is not willing to accept that the clergy felt and acted upon a duty to watch over their rural parishes, it is unlikely that either Roman or Armenian ecclesiastics would allow their economic base to be threatened.[49]

Imperial investment in the evangelisation of the countryside further undermines the notion that the cultivation of rural communities was not an interest of the State. Missions required some degree of organisation and management, and much of their financial backing was provided by the imperial court. Take for example Corduene, which Diocletian had brought under Roman hegemony with the treaty of A.D. 298. The territory came into Persian control in A.D. 359, while the mighty fortress at Bezabde fell in A.D. 360. With the treaty of Nisibis, further Roman installations and five of the Transtigritane satrapies were surrendered. Soon the pro-Persian families began to reassert their influence, precipitating the partition of Armenia.[50] Evangelisation provided one way in which the Romans, when prevented from direct military intervention, could use local communities not only to secure the frontier, but to exert their influence beyond the border. By the end of the fourth century Honorius and Arcadius are providing gold for building projects, gifts of food and liturgical supplies and yearly grants to monasteries in the Tur 'Abdin. From here monks crossed the Tigris into Corduene converting new areas and bolstering non-Roman Christians.[51] Such missionary activity has parallels elsewhere along the north-eastern frontier. We find Marutha conducting similar efforts across the Nymphius from the state-funded religious centre at Martyropolis. It seems likely that similar penetration of the country was expected from the

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48 See above chp. 2 § 2.

49 See above chp. 3 § 5.

50 Amm. Marc., 18.9.2 (loss of Corduene), 20.7 (Bezabde), 25.7.9. (Treaty of Nisibis); Faust. Buz., 4.16-18 and MX 3.15 (diminution of Roman influence in Armenia); C.S Lightfoot (1986) 521.

51 See sources and discussion in A.N. Palmer (1990) 49-52, and 80-1.

expanded fortress-city constructed at Theodosiopolis, an old Arsacid holding where Gregory the Illuminator had ordained bishops, but which, after the A.D. 387 partition, came under the jurisdiction of the imperial church.[52]

Chapter II, and to a lesser extent Chapters III and IV of Isaac's *Limits* examine the function the Roman army played in putting down revolts and rebellions.[53] Despite the attention given by Isaac, the Jewish revolts were unique, and usually a result of very localised tensions sparked by religious difficulties.[54] The life of a peasant under Roman, Armenian, or Persian rule was undoubtedly hard, and the classes who held power were susceptible to abusing that power. But the disposition of fortifications in the North-East does not seem to have been determined by a need to suppress the native population. In our study of the frontier cities, individual cases of treachery have been discussed, and clearly local rulers were conscious of the need to ensure at least the loyalty of urban governors. However, it is difficult to find many cases in the area where disaffection toward Roman rule burst into revolt. One of the most intractable sectors of the north-eastern frontier was the Pontic Alps, to the east of Trapezus. Yet, in spite of the unruly tribes and the insurrection in A.D. 69, the city did not receive a legionary garrison until the third century, when Gothic marauders increased their raids after the collapse of the Bosporan kingdom.[55] On the other hand, when the *bdeashkh* of Aldznik, or Arzanene, shifted his loyalty to Persia, Constantius did send troops to help the Armenian king Khusro put down the rebellion.[56] The loyal Transtigritane satrapies were an essential buffer against southern advances against Armenia, or northern advances against Mesopotamia, but the satrapies themselves do not appear to have been occupied, and the

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52 N. Garsoïan (1989) 470-1.

53 B. Isaac (1990) 55 admits a concentration on Judaea, but implies at 67, 99, 421-2 his conclusions may be applicable in other areas. However, at 422, he does not deny that certain areas "accepted Roman rule with comparative ease."

54 See M. Mor (1989) 335, 343-5; and U. Rappaport (1989) 374.

55 T.B. Mitford (1974) 164; on the Bosporan role in controlling barbarian incursions see Zos. 1.21, discussed in D.H Braund (1984) 93.

56 Faust. Buz., 3.9; MX 3.4-6; C.S. Lightfoot (1986) 519 believes this tension may have prompted the construction of small installations such as the *equites* fort at Tilli.

small forts constructed along the Tigris simply reinforced the satrapies upon which the responsibility for defence devolved.[57] An argument could also be made that the opposition of the Armenian satrapies to the emperor Zeno in A.D. 485 is evidence for a rebellion.[58] The action by the local Armenian leaders was not a demonstration against Roman power, but support for better-known Roman leaders; Illus had been the *magister militum per Orientem* since A.D. 483, and won the support of the Armenian clients.[59] After Illus and Leontius had been put down, the Armenian satrapies underwent minor changes. They were still controlled by Armenians, but hereditary accession was abolished, and some form of taxation may have been imposed.[60] Traditional methods of local control remained, but a greater degree of accountability was introduced. By and large, rebellions do not appear to have been widespread or a serious threat in the region.

Isaac correctly states that cities were the coveted prize between Rome and Persia along much of the north-east frontier.[61] But contrary to Isaac's conclusions, imperial expenditure was quite heavy for both military and civilian projects.[62] Vast sums of money must have been invested in the development of such settlements as Amida, Dara, Martyropolis, Melitene, Satala, and Theodosiopolis. Additionally, the examination of cities in chapter two indicates that the emperors frequently targeted funds for non-military projects such as aqueducts, public granaries, amphitheatres, churches, martyr reliquaries, convents. These findings do not deny the obvious propaganda value gained in building any sort of structure with an inscription reminding Roman subjects of their patrons and masters. The personality of emperors and, more importantly, local

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57 J. Matthews (1989) 53; E. Winter (1989) 560-1.

58 On the rebellion see Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.1.17-27, and A.H.M. Jones (1964) 228-9.

59 Mal., 387-8; J. Ant., 214.2; A.H.M. Jones (1964) 228.

60 A.H.M. Jones (1964) 229 maintains that the *comes Armeniae* was introduced at this time and that he governed the area with troops. But as N. Adontz (1970) 93, 95-6 points out, the *comes* at this time held no military power, but functioned in the same manner as the old *marspan*.

61 B. Isaac (1990) 252. However, as has been argued above the massive fortifications built by the Romans do not indicate an abandonment of the countryside, as Isaac claims at 253.

62 See for example B. Isaac (1990) 367-9.

leaders, had great influence on the amount of generosity shown to a community. However, local patrons and imperial governors concentrated on building monuments which would be visible to the subjects; what was visible in the daily lives of Roman subjects was normally what was held as beneficial to the community.[63] One should not then say that because the imperial government won propaganda victories in its construction policy, local communities lost in the process. Furthermore, the level of wealth in the East rose steadily throughout the period, and archaeological evidence indicates continued civic expansion.[64] Whether the accompanying urban expansion is to be attributed to imperial initiatives, is difficult to say. What has been suggested is that the imperial government was stimulating growth on a local level simply by providing centres of administration, worship, and economic and cultural exchange, and from the fourth century on such improvements were often the result of the joint action between the Roman emperors and the local ecclesiastical leaders. Concessions could be made to Isaac's thesis in recognising that the church, not the central government was redistributing wealth, and showing concern for the poor. But after the fourth century, one can rarely divorce the actions of the church from the state. The reason that Christian leaders were effective in addressing the needs of their communities is because they were working in conjunction with the imperial government on a local level.[65] Patronage by the imperial government guaranteed the church's spiritual claims to manage their flock. Christian authority was effective because the ecclesiastical leaders were inevitably local men and women, known to their community, but whose status and office allowed them to travel throughout the empire and exert a certain amount of spiritual pressure on both civic governors and imperial courts.[66] If nothing else Christianity helped foster a notion of community which perhaps did create a remarkable change in people's attitudes. The church provided constant attention to the minor details of a peasant's life:

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63 Contrast B. Isaac (1990) 304-9 with the conclusions of M.K. and R.L. Thornton (1989) 120-1.

64 See above chp. 3 § 3.

65 See above chp. 3 § 5.

66 See above chp. 4 § 5 and § 7.

whether he was fed, cared for when ill, had a suitable burial, etc.. Whether the emperor believed in adorning his cities or not, as is contested by Isaac, may still be debatable, but clearly his local agents did.

Did the Roman State have a grand strategy along the north-eastern frontier? It is helpful to keep in mind a comment made by an author who has influenced the thinking of both Luttwak and Isaac: "while the horizon of strategy is bounded by the war, grand strategy looks beyond the war to subsequent peace."[67] Isaac does not believe the Roman State looked beyond to the peace, but perpetually geared itself for war, the glory of the emperor and his army. A crucial problem with this stance is that, discounting raids, large areas of the frontier saw long periods of peace. Yet the army was ever present, subjects had to be ruled, and the emperor's attention was occupied with much more than martial ventures. Furthermore, Isaac is decidedly against a theory of defence in depth, which is the essence of effective local defence.[68] Examples have been given above to support a view that the imperial government did seek to create a secure frontier. To end, let us turn to the ancient sources to see if any frontier policy is vocalised which might support a theory of defence in depth in some modified form.[69]

There are two incidents where ancient authors put a strategy into the mouths of Rome's enemies which seem to indicate Roman aims, if only because plans are suggested to cope with frontier defences. When Antonius defected to the Persians he advised Sapor to avoid lengthy siege operations and strike deep into the Syrian interior. The same basic strategy was suggested to Kavadh by the Arab chieftain Alamoundaras.[70] Both accounts, written by former imperial officers, illuminate Roman aims in explaining how to avoid them. The frontier zone was thick with fortified sites which would independently resist the Persians and protract campaigns. Ammianus claims elsewhere that Diocletian had reorganised

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67 B.H.L. Hart (1953) 188; see also 202-6.

68 B. Isaac (1990) 374-77.

69 B. Isaac (1990) 170 holds that the Romans were not "capable of realising in practice what they could not verbally define". There was no defence in depth as defined by Luttwak, if only because large concentrations of troops remained close to the frontier during periods of war; see L.M Whitby (1986a) 727.

70 Amm. Marc., 18.5.1-7; Procopius, *Wars*, 1.17.34.

the eastern frontier to achieve this effect, but this is as close as one gets to a Luttwakian defence in depth; as Isaac points out, there is no massive retaliatory force.[71] Nonetheless, literary evidence upholds the suggestion that local defences performed functions which remained consistent between the late third and late sixth centuries. Fortified settlements slowed Persian advances to allow the larger field armies to eventually confront the invaders,[72] and denied them supplies.[73] Should the enemy approach the frontier "he will meet with the strategy of generals who will teach him that it would be better to fight with deer. Should he cross the Tigris, he will be defeated by city walls and will be able neither to ravage or harvest the land..."[74] This is not to deny the obvious offensive value offered by fortified settlements so close to the Romano-Persian border. A fruitful offensive, however, still required that Roman subjects man the walls, while the Roman army conducted raids across the frontier. Should anything go wrong, imperial forces relied on fortified settlements to provide refuge.[75] It seems evident that the imperial government did rely on local initiative to confront incursions of every scale. That the emperors were willing to back such local efforts over a three-hundred year period indicates a level of consciousness even if it is not expressed in systematic terms. Local defence need not be viewed as defence in depth, if the term is too anachronistic for scholars. It is rather, on a small scale, not unlike the policy employed during the early principate where initial frontier stability and security were the responsibility of client kings.[76] Fortified settlements, like so many client kingdoms, acted as the first line

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71 Amm. Marc., 23.5.2. J.C. Mann (1979) points out that the lack of a large number of troops in the interior prevents this from being defence in depth as Luttwak would have it. B. Isaac (1990) 374 points out NATO's influence on Luttwak.

72 Libanius, *Or.*, 59. 76-82, 99-120. Procopius, *Buildings*, 2.2.19-21: Dara is a place where the Persian will waste his time on sieges, and 2.4.14-21speaks of the thick line of forts from Dara to Amida as a "bulwark to shield the land of the Romans".

73 Julian, *Or.*, 1.22d-25b. Most sieges seem to have been risky for the Persians who could not maintain their supplies indefinitely.

74 Libanius, *Ep.*, 49.

75 For this combination of local defence and regional offence see Zach. Mit., 9.6 (Martyropolis); Th. Sim., 1.14.1-7 (Martyropolis), and 1.13.4-5 (Tur 'Abdin sites).

76 This similarity is suggested in J.C Mann (1979) 182-83; on the clients' duties see D.H. Braund (1985) 91-104.

of defence, and efficiently supplied the Roman army with intelligence, military, and logistical support.

§ 5. Conclusion:

It is somewhat paradoxical that the imperial government which expected individual communities to conduct their administration and defence with a high degree of independence, thus creating a patch-work of semi-autonomous regions, had an underlying or grand strategy. However, the Roman state seemed to be aware of the limits of its own efficiency. Greater loyalty and security could be gained if the frontier settlements were allowed to administer and control their immediate locality. This policy could only succeed if the morale of the subjects remained high. To achieve this the imperial government skillfully combined building projects with a rhetoric firmly expressing the vitality of the empire.[77] Except in cases where local communities failed to defend their territories, the imperial government placed the responsibility for defending the frontier on their subjects in the cities and villages of the frontier. Even where the government intervened directly, the greatest changes were made in making the leadership of each community more accountable, and providing improved frontier security through building projects. Such a policy of integration has parallels in the Romans' attitude towards the empire's diverse cultures, where it has been said that the empire "endured so long because it succeeded in making multitudes of citizens in far-flung regions feel close to the power that controlled them."[78]

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77 L.M. Whitby (1986a) 723.

78 G. W. Bowersock (1982) 299 n. 6.

Conclusion

Northern Syria and Mesopotamia were effectively lost to the Romans after the coming of the Arabs. However, much of the north-east frontier proved effective well into later Byzantine periods. The Muslim conquerors advanced to Melitene at the foot of the Taurus mountains. Centuries passed while Arab and Byzantine troops engaged in harsh guerilla warfare, during which the frontier lines moved little. The earliest advance against Armenia was halted by combined Byzantine and Armenian forces. Satala and many of the settlements on the Armenian plateau found themselves in a no-man's land between various regional powers. Trade routes changed and this area fell into decline in the seventh century. Conversely, Trapezus expanded its influence over the surrounding hinterland and experienced a golden age of importance. Armenia, itself, was overrun. Yet, even after an energetic push to the Caucasus, Arab forces were faced with the constant counter-attacks of the Byzantines and an intractable Armenian population. Armenia continued to be ruled by local nobles, but now usually in the name of the Caliph. Many of the cities of the region continued to enjoy high levels of prosperity, and Armenian literature and arts flourished. Christianity remained at the centre of Ciscaucasian society, and, until the early years of this century, remained the majority religion in much of Ciscaucasia. Anatolia, the heart of the Byzantine empire was not penetrated until the middle ages. The achievement of local defence on the north-east frontier during the period explored in this thesis was to give the empire several more centuries of stability on her eastern frontier, despite a loss of influence.

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